

spare Rib

a women's
liberation magazine
September 1977
Issue 62
35 pence

Taking action



in the pulpit...

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action...at British Steel...against male violence...
for women's clinics...

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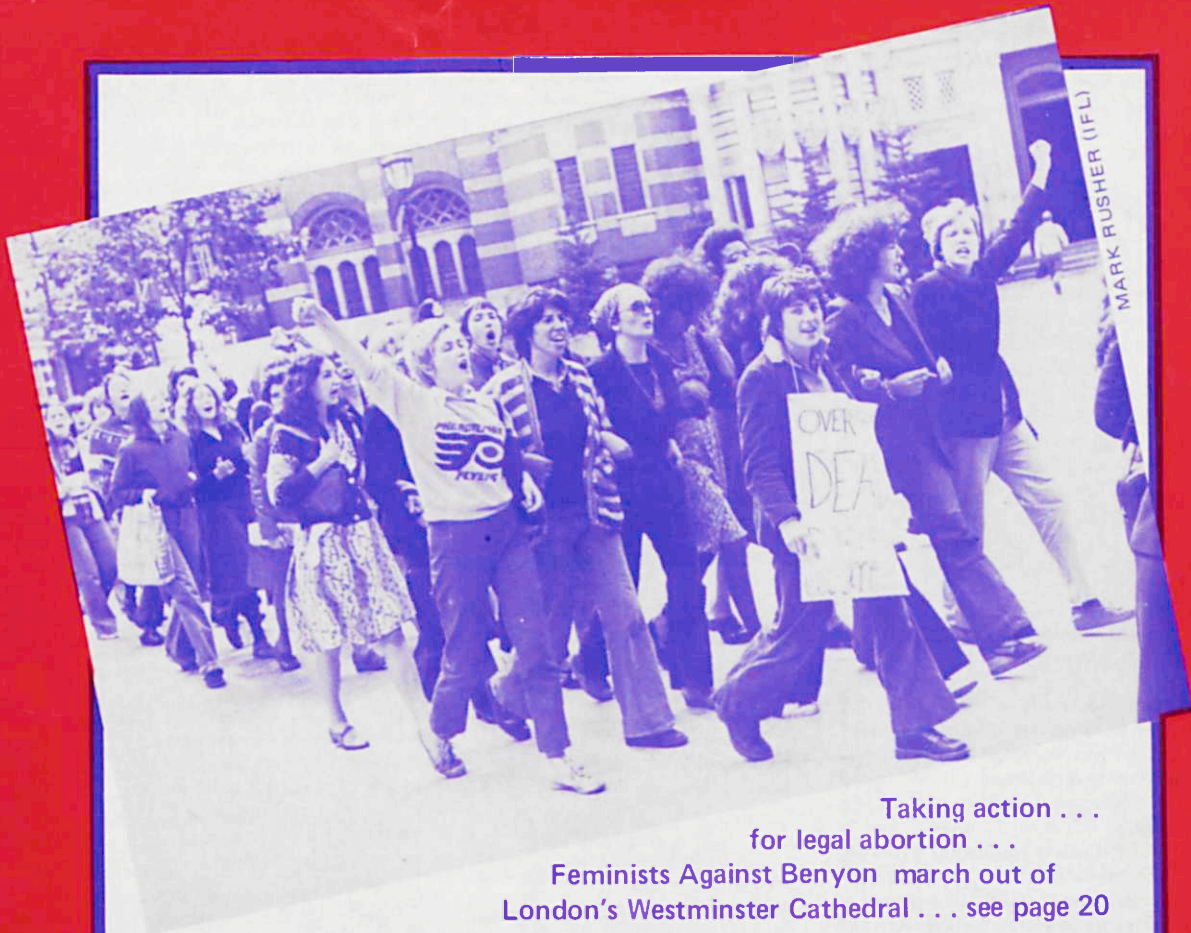
The monthly journal, *Race Today*, under the editorship of Darcus Howe, honorary life member of Renegades Steelband, Trinidad, and now Chairman of the Carnival Development Committee has, over the past three years, publicised the development of the West Indian Carnival and the battle to keep it on the streets of Notting Hill where it originated.

This pamphlet, by the Race Today Collective, is a collection of these articles outlining the origins, development and struggles to date.

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Taking action . . .
for legal abortion . . .

Feminists Against Benyon march out of
London's Westminster Cathedral . . . see page 20

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... writing by Pat Kahn

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please send your letters
to Spare Rib
24 Clerkenwell Close
London EC1.



* indicates letters have been cut

Who pays 'Wages for Housework'? . . .

Dear Spare Rib,
We went on the Women Against Rape march today and came home angry and confused.

What we cannot understand is this:

If it was stipulated as a rule of the march that no party political banners were to be carried, how come members of Women For Life, and Wages For Housework were permitted to carry banners proclaiming the politics of their parties?

Supporters of the National Abortion Campaign who were present at the gathering prior to the march were not carrying banners or wearing badges, they were there solely as women against rape — which is what the march was called — and were angry, and protested that they as feminists could not march with women who were advertising opposing political beliefs.

In answer to the protests the organisers eventually said that the women from WFL had agreed not to march if to do so would cause a split. When the column of marchers had formed the WFL women with banners and T-shirts bearing their slogan joined at the end and refused to leave when asked to do so. The organisers, WAR/WFH, who were called upon as mediators in what was becoming an explosive situation merely shrugged their shoulders and refused to help further, leaving the NAC supporters to abandon the march rather than compromise their beliefs.

Were all the women who continued to march aware that they were marching with women who were publicly showing their allegiance to an organisation which is against abortion under any circumstances, including that of a raped woman?

Were we right to leave?

Also, is it true, as rumoured, that Wilmitte Brown was flown to England at the expense of Wages For Housework? If so, how can they afford to? We do know that Women For Life is financed by

the Catholic Church and other right wing organisations. Who finances Wages For Housework? Two of many,
P Tarrant
L Shurey
London W8

. . . and who wants them?

*Dear Spare Rib,
Ms J French (SR 58) says that "Wages for Housework is the beginning of liberation from housework". To pay women for housework is merely to reinforce women in the home. She goes on to say, "It (pay) will form the basis for women to make a choice." What choice? Until the idea of housework as women's work is done away with, any decision of the woman to take a job outside the home merely involves her in two jobs. Money can hardly ease the burden.

Surely it is not a matter of whether housework is paid or not, but that it should be shared by men and women. I am amazed and somewhat sickened that the women's movement should be concerned with the idea of wages for housework.

Yours,
Vicky Coghill
London W5



My money in his name

Dear Spare Rib,
I am writing to you to bring up a point concerning the woman's right to payment. My husband has been on strike for seven weeks. The Social Security only pay an allowance for me (the wife) and our baby. The striker gets nothing. How come then, that every week when the giro comes it is paid in my husband's name? It isn't so bad for me, because we share



our money, but how many women must only receive a small part from their man? Surely this method should be altered?

Yours in sisterhood,
Carla Horrigan
Salford, Lancashire

Working Women

*Dear Spare Rib,
I refer to the article on the Equal Opportunities Commission (SR 60). The section entitled "A Swedish model for the EOC!" referring to Swedish women contained the remark "(Some of whom had never worked)". May I ask how women are ever going to shatter the myth that housework, motherhood and all the shitty jobs that most women, especially those with families, do every day of their lives, is not work?

ALL WOMEN WORK, and if Spare Rib of all publications cannot clearly see that fact, if we women cannot at least agree on that one point and identify this as one of the most basic aspects of our common oppression, then what hope is there ever of achieving true Women's Liberation? Yours sincerely,
Sandy Martin
Coudson, Surrey

It's their business

Dear Spare Rib,
Re: prostitution (again) — to deny that prostitution is an essential social service is a long way from denying that women can enjoy sex on a physical level; Sheila Miller's logic (SR 60) escapes me. Having casual sex is one thing, but buying it is quite another.

I would suggest that most men go to prostitutes for the sake of their egos, not of their penises. If prostitutes are keen to continue boosting the male ego because it pays, or because they enjoy doing it, that's their business. But no way can I see why they should regard themselves as feminists par excellence, as some of them appear to do. Would we expect to find pacifists working in a napalm factory?

Yours in puzzled sisterhood,
Hilary Russell
London EC1

The Price of Feminism

*Dear Spare Rib,
As a Scottish sister now living 'down south', I feel quite personally concerned about where conferences are to be held. The overheard comment in Lorna Mitchell's article (SR 60), "Someone would have to be a dedicated feminist to travel all the way up to Edinburgh for a conference", plus a bitter conversation heard in a London bookshop about how "ridiculous" it was to have to go all that way, referring to the Radical Feminism conference in Edinburgh at the beginning of July, really set me thinking. The

conversation referred to "how few of them there are up there". Of course there are fewer feminists in Scotland — there are less people. With the concentration of population in London it's not surprising there is so much more organised feminism, but it *does* mean that the Movement seems to be London based. It's really important that conferences be held all over Britain.

Yes, feminists in the south will have to pay to get up to Edinburgh this time — but remember all the times that the Scots and women from the North of England have had to do it to get down to London. Perhaps we should consider a system of averaging out travel expenses between all the women at every conference?

Love,
Nicola Murray
Cambridge

Still Rocking

Dear Spare Rib,
I am a 49-year-old grandmother with two sons. I have read Spare Rib regularly for the last two years. Incidentally, congratulations on your 5th birthday. I share both my sons' interest in punk rock as it keeps me young.
Grandma Marsh
Hyde, Newtown



Threatening

*Dear Spare Rib,
This morning on French radio I heard an incredible song by a notoriously male chauvinist singer. In it he is trying deliberately to make men angry at the women's movement. It is nothing less than an anti-feminist political song in which he calls for solidarity between the "real males" to fight this new "disease" of our society. His hate and his aggression are just unbelievable. The good thing about it is that it is proof that we are getting stronger; such a hysterical reaction is a sign that something is happening . . . In sisterhood,
Danièle Lebreton
Cleveland

Backs-Up

Dear Spare Rib,
I did enjoy Bob Marley and the Wailers at the Rainbow. But for one thing: the personifications of eternal Womanhood in the form of the three black sisters who stood at the front of the stage, coming in with the back-up when necessary, swaying rhythmically — beautiful, dignified, and so passive, oh how passive!



The music was music to liberate, and the words wriggled out of the crack that could split open the world, and as the evening grew warmer Marley and the members of his group emerged as individuals and established a strong rapport with the audience. As Marley got funkier, kicked his legs and pranced about the stage, as his guitarist rushed towards us and plunged to his knees, the three girls remained as one, shapely and self-effacing in close-fitting black dresses and identical headscarves, their legs held closely together and rooted to the same spot. As the words got angrier, they could only quicken their movements: what else could they do in a world in which men burn and loot and shoot the sheriff in frustration and righteous anger, while the woman sits at home and cries over her starving child? But still the question bugged me all evening: what was it doing to the psyche of those women to spend their lives as back-up, to keep their bodies poised, controlled, impersonally sexy with music like that around?

Of course, it was stupid of me to ask the question, because I know the answer. But I also know that the road that leads to the liberation of the third world, and of the black population of Britain, is the road that leads to the liberation of every woman. So, in the words of the male songwriter, Stand up for your rights! Keep up the fight!
Yours in sisterhood
Carol Sanders
Poole



Grunwick

Dear Spare Rib,
I enjoyed the article on Grunwick (SR 61), but I would like to correct the record on the role played by the Brent Community Law Centre in the dispute. We are glad that Bea

Campbell and Val Charlton feel that we have assisted the strikers and we hope we have. But our role has been limited to providing legal services.

It is not our role — as a publicly-funded legal services agency — to put pressure on APEX, or any other union!
Yours sincerely,
Harriet Harman
London NW10

Mass Revenge

★Dear Spare Rib,
Having today had an unsatisfactory and abruptly curtailed argument, I have to try to communicate some of the anger, frustration and confusion that I'm now experiencing.

The argument was about rape; it raised dilemmas that I so often find myself confronted with in the WLM. Members of Newcastle Women's Liberation had been stencilling "Castrate rapists" around the town in response to recent High Court rulings. As an actual statement of policy I thought "Surely not." However it did transpire that 'spontaneous retribution', very severe prison sentences, flogging, were seen as answers to the rape problem. When I tried to suggest that these might be more cathartic to women than effective as solutions, I was accused of being a member of the National Front! It was implied that I was dismissing the rape issue. I regard rape as equivalent to torture in its total denial of humanity and autonomy; however I was disturbed by the lack of any wider political perspective.

I would suggest that rape has to do with power, and is part of an entrenched sexist culture that denies female autonomy. To maintain that rapists are all either "sick" or innately brutal is to treat rape as a form of aberration in an otherwise non-sexist society. Rape could instead be seen as a horrifyingly brutal reflection and extension of standard male attitudes. The "sick"/"brutal" analysis seems to lead to very limited solutions (that don't include better support for victims and self-defence) of 'treatment' or punishment. Is there any evidence that harsh punishment is a deterrent? Certainly retributive justice is a very right wing concept. Suddenly I found it easy to imagine the women I was arguing with sitting around the guillotine knitting!

My choice to be involved in women's liberation reflects my anger at the tyranny of anti-abortion, my sense of the absurdity and repression that is sexism. But a lot of women seem to be there for mass revenge. I'm beginning to suspect that the aims of non-hierarchy, flexibility, open-ended discussions are merely paid lip service to by many feminists. Does anyone else have these doubts?

Lots of love,
Gill Taylor
Chorley, Lancashire

Oaklands Women Centre

Dear Spare Rib,
We have been inundated with bookings since the article about 'Oaklands' (SR 60) and I'm sorry to say that we are now FULLY booked until September 9th.

If you would like to come after that please book at least two weeks in advance by post, enclosing s.a.e., to guarantee yourself a place.

Fiona and Meryl are leaving at the end of August, and send love and best wishes to all the wonderful women we've met during the year. Many thanks for all the support we have received — we know you will continue to support Oaklands and the women who take over from us.

Oaklands Women's Centre
Glasbury-on-Wye
Powys, Wales



Phallacy

★Dear Spare Rib,
I find it very difficult to understand why so many women have sexual intercourse with men so often. I find little or no pleasure in it, though I can bring myself to orgasm satisfactorily in a few seconds. I can enjoy sleeping — i.e. having physical contact — with a man with whom I have a good relationship. But the actual act of penetration seems rather pointless. It seems untenable for a feminist

to have sexual intercourse purely for the man's satisfaction. Do some women really enjoy it, despite the risk of pregnancy? If not, why do it?

Diane,
London

More . . .

★Dear Spare Rib,
I read with interest Ms. Knuckles' letter about developing the lesbian potential. As a 'straight' sister I am finding it increasingly difficult to live with a society where the male/female relationship seems the be all and end all. I would like to know what other sisters feel about lesbianism, as it isn't exactly in the open and there is no way of knowing what it is like without committing yourself.

In sisterhood,
Sue McGuirk
West Wickham, Kent

. . . or less

★Dear Spare Rib,
I would like to cancel my order for Spare Rib, as I feel the content does not conform with my ideas about women. I believe in women, admire their strengths, but do not feel it necessary to masculinise them. Your magazine will no doubt attract lesbians — and at times I wonder if this is your target audience — but I do not think you offer enough for the average woman to relate to.
Yours faithfully,
Paula Castleton
Nottingham



spare Rib

"Usually or frequently indecent or obscene" is how the Irish Censorship Board described Spare Rib, on banning it in February for six months from the Republic of Ireland. Six months are up and this issue should be back on the Irish newsstands.

Meanwhile the Family Planning Association have won an action against the Censorship Board, who banned one of their birth control leaflets. Justice Hamilton ruled that anyone


who has a book banned by the Board has a right to put forward a case as to why it should not be banned. This diminishes the powers of the Board considerably, as it was their practice never to communicate directly with the authors or publishers. Trevor Danker from the Irish Independent goes as far as to say that Hamilton's judgement has "more or less neatly killed off the Censorship Board". Keep your fingers crossed. □



to school with fear

"I ask myself, what is it about it? And I'm not the only one, you know. Many people feel like me. But I can't keep going, not when you hear all the things they're saying to you every day. Then, you know, two people will have a fight and it will never end, and everybody round it is part of it. If you want one person to win and you tell this to the wrong person then you lose some more friends. It keeps going like this too. It's not only black against white, but mostly that's what it is. That seems to be all that's happening in school these days. You can't tell the teachers about it. Of course they know, but if you tell them the other kids think you're weak, or scared, or not loyal to them. No one is allowed to tell anybody they're afraid. I tell my best friend Jessie, but I wouldn't tell anybody else. Some days I get so scared before I have to go to school I feel like I'm going to, you know, throw up. I run into the bathroom but nothing happens. I know it won't because it's nerves.

"Every day I walk by this long



Polly, a small West Indian girl of 13, has lived with her family in the Brixton area of London for seven years. It's a poor area compared with the rest of London: housing is worse, schools are overcrowded, and there are less jobs. The family had to move several times. Polly's father works on building sites and needs to live close by. But they are also constantly looking for a better place to live. Polly doesn't mind moving too much but feels badly each time she has to leave an old set of schoolfriends. She does well in her schoolwork, and works extremely hard. But each new school gets more demanding than the one before. She always makes sure to choose a best friend in her new school, but she likes to be friendly with all her classmates — she hates fights and arguments. And the racial aspect of the fights only makes her feel that much more upset and confused. One Wednesday evening, she was assaulted and raped by three boys, none of whom she claims she knew, although she is certain they attend her school. Admitted as an emergency case to a hospital several miles from her neighbourhood, she talked to Tom Cottle, a friend of her family, who recorded what she said.

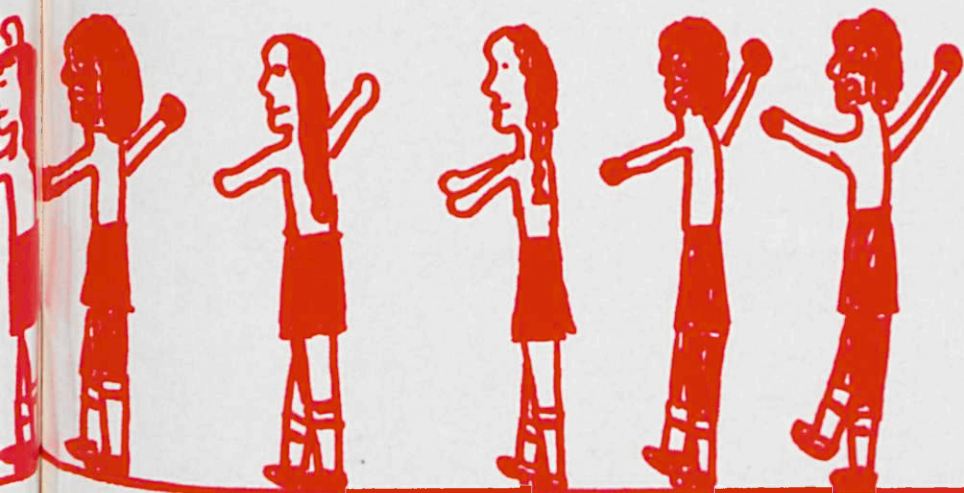




brick wall. You have to go through this little passage way to get to school. There's usually a cat there climbing around. When I see him I tell him, bring me good luck. He usually runs away, which I tell myself is a good sign. Then I tell myself, no matter what anybody tells you, don't be upset, don't be afraid. Sometimes it works, but most of the time it doesn't, especially if Jessie isn't with me. It's better when she's with me. I rather have someone yell out, there goes two nigger girls, than have me be there all by myself. You don't know what they're going to do next when they do it, and it's always happening. You don't know what's the best thing to do either. Like they'll say, Hey, you short nigger, what are you, some kind of a pygmy? That's my own special name because I'm short. Aren't they clever! I never know what to do. Some people say you shout back at them so they won't do it again. But I couldn't get myself to do that. What am I supposed to do when it happens, like, when we're on the playground or the stairs? Or in the class too? It happens in class too. Hey, pygmy, you read the lesson for today? What am I supposed to do? Jessie says I should

keep my mouth shut and tell one of the boys, like, the biggest person I see, that kid over there called me a pygmy. That's what she says to do because she says if we don't start fighting back they'll never stop doing it to us. Maybe she's right, but I can't see myself going up to some guy and telling him what someone said to me.

"The boys tell us too, to tell them. They say they'll go after anyone we want them to, that they're not afraid of a single person in the school. I can't believe what's going on. If you tell someone you don't know what kind of trouble you may be starting, and if you keep your mouth shut, you know what you're letting go on. But everyone keeps saying, they aren't going to hurt you, they aren't going to hurt you, nothing will happen. But I don't see why they should be allowed to call me things that has to do with my being coloured, and that's mostly what they yell. Everybody fights about it. Even Jessie's been in some fights. I didn't see her, but I did see another a few months ago. I got so frightened *that* time I did throw up. One of the worst things was what I was thinking about, how, like, at first I was afraid she would get hurt and I started to cry, and then, without even thinking about it, I found myself hoping she would kill this white girl. I was crying but I wanted her to kill the white girl.▶



I think mostly because the girl was white and because of what she said. She called Jessie some horrible name, I didn't even understand it at first. Jessie didn't either, but you could tell it wasn't a compliment.

"Then, you know, when they fight, everybody crowds round and then they start fighting, like they did this one time when Jessie fought this girl Shea. They were all fighting, and I ran away because I got scared. That time I told my mother, which I usually don't do. My mother told me she was going to school to see what was happening. She went too, but the master told her there was nothing the school could do if children fought before or after school; it wasn't their responsibility. He didn't think the fighting was all that bad. Kids have always fought, that's what he told my mother. He said he was surprised she would find all this new. Didn't she have fights in her neighbourhood where she went to school? That's what he told her. I mean, that's what I know he told her, because some of the other things she wouldn't tell me, but she told my father. I know one of them was that I was supposed to be known as a little bit of a baby, that's what the master said; that just because I was a girl didn't mean I shouldn't have to fight and protect myself. He said he thought coloured people were teaching this to their children. She said she thought he was prejudiced, and he told her our kind is too sensitive about all this stuff. Besides he said, he did a special favour for us letting me into the school when we moved here because he could have said no because the classes were so big. My mother told him no one in this country does any favours for us and he told her she was wrong; that's all coloured people do is ask for favours. Anyway, he said there's nothing that could be done about the fighting. It was happening in the school, sure, maybe once a week too, which is a lie because it happens all the time, but the problem isn't the school, it's the country. So my mother said, you mean it's all *our* fault and he said, you said it, Mrs Davies, I didn't.

"I was surprised too, because I thought the master was a real nice man. At least I never saw him do anything bad to anybody. I don't know all that much what the other kids think of him. Jessie hates him because he blamed her that one

time for starting the fighting which she didn't. I know, because I was there. But I always thought he liked us. Like, Mrs Brainaird likes us. She's always asking me how I'm doing and if I have problems. I don't talk to her, but maybe I could. You can't tell with some of these people, like, how they're going to be if they have to take a side. I think a lot of the teachers would like to take our side once in a while, but they're afraid what the master or the assistants might say to them. Lots of them aren't much better off than we are, I guess, although they don't talk about it with us. Well that's not completely true, because Mrs Strandy, she told Jessie and this other girl how she was afraid to teach in the school with all the fighting, so she was looking for a new job. They had a long talk about it. Jessie told her maybe she could do something to make it better, but she said, no, she was leaving, even if it meant she wouldn't be able to find another job. She'd rather go on the dole than teach here. That's what she said. Then she told them, it was better before they let all the coloureds in. Can you believe her saying this to Jessie, who's coloured! She didn't even realise what she was saying. She told them, it was better before they let the coloureds in. So Jessie said, well, Mrs Strandy, if you haven't noticed yet, *we're* coloured. So Mrs Strandy said, of course I know you're coloured, but it's not the children I'm talking about it's their parents! It's all your fathers who don't work and don't want to, and all your mothers having all these children. That's what the matter is. It's never the children's

fault. So Jessie just looks at her and says Oh! That's all, just oh!

"Doesn't my school sound like a wonderful place? Now do you know why I don't like going around there, no matter how much I might learn, which I don't think is all that much. Most of the time all I learn is that a lot of people in my school think I'm a coloured pygmy, but I ought to be learning a little more than that. And another thing, if these people, like the master and Mrs Strandy, have all these feelings about us, I would like to know how they can be allowed to stay in the school, and some of those people have the most important jobs over there, you know. They make the decisions and they have all these ideas. That's all we hear from them: it's the coloureds. Pretty soon, it will get bad for me and I really will be able to throw up before I walk to school, instead of just thinking that I do. Like, right now, telling all of this to you gives me the same feelings I have before I walk there in the morning. It's like I need my lucky black and white cat to tell you what I *think* about school, and we aren't anywhere near school now, are we? I'm not sure where we are here, but it feels that we're a long, long way from school. At least I hope it's a long way from school. I know this isn't really a holiday but I'm trying to pretend it is.□



the bath

*this dark of which I am the face
this cave beach my canoe finger explores
stretched and ribbed like shipspars*

*or this cavemouth of water or blood
swamped*

*drifting anemones out
from my womb to sea
the lost fronds of a cradle unwound*

*a gentle loss
my finger winds a tiny curl of my leaving*

*— soft head
birthing myself in bathwater —*

shout

*she opens her sweet gullible cunt
she wants, a fist
going down into the sweetjar
into the bundle of toffees
she's not lying gurgling
any more: shouting
she wants her fullness
the scarlet doublebeak of a fledgling
crammed*

*and hoping for that small good world
the inching, aching, sweet, full-up mouth*

poems by Judith Kazantzis

Leda and Leonardo the Swan
(after the well known picture)

*Leda, the inside out lady of the swan
wants to knuckle the cold
rotter who fluttered her to bed*

*caught in the infinite wiggle
in a mesmerization of paint
here she is, propped in her voluptuous stay
maddened
for all who like a good sex object
shielding her feathered friend*

*his beak pinches her demonstrable little
breasts, quacking, all mine
her plump pubic mound pretty and public
her eyes abashed
how she blushes, the mystery!
my corrected darling!*

*the silent curly face
carries on talking backwards to the wall
no no no no.*

ILLUSTRATED BY BEGONIA

BEGONIA

"Women are uncharted territory"

The first play by a woman to be performed at Stratford by the Royal Shakespeare Company opens in September. The author, Pam Gems, talks to Micheline Wandor.

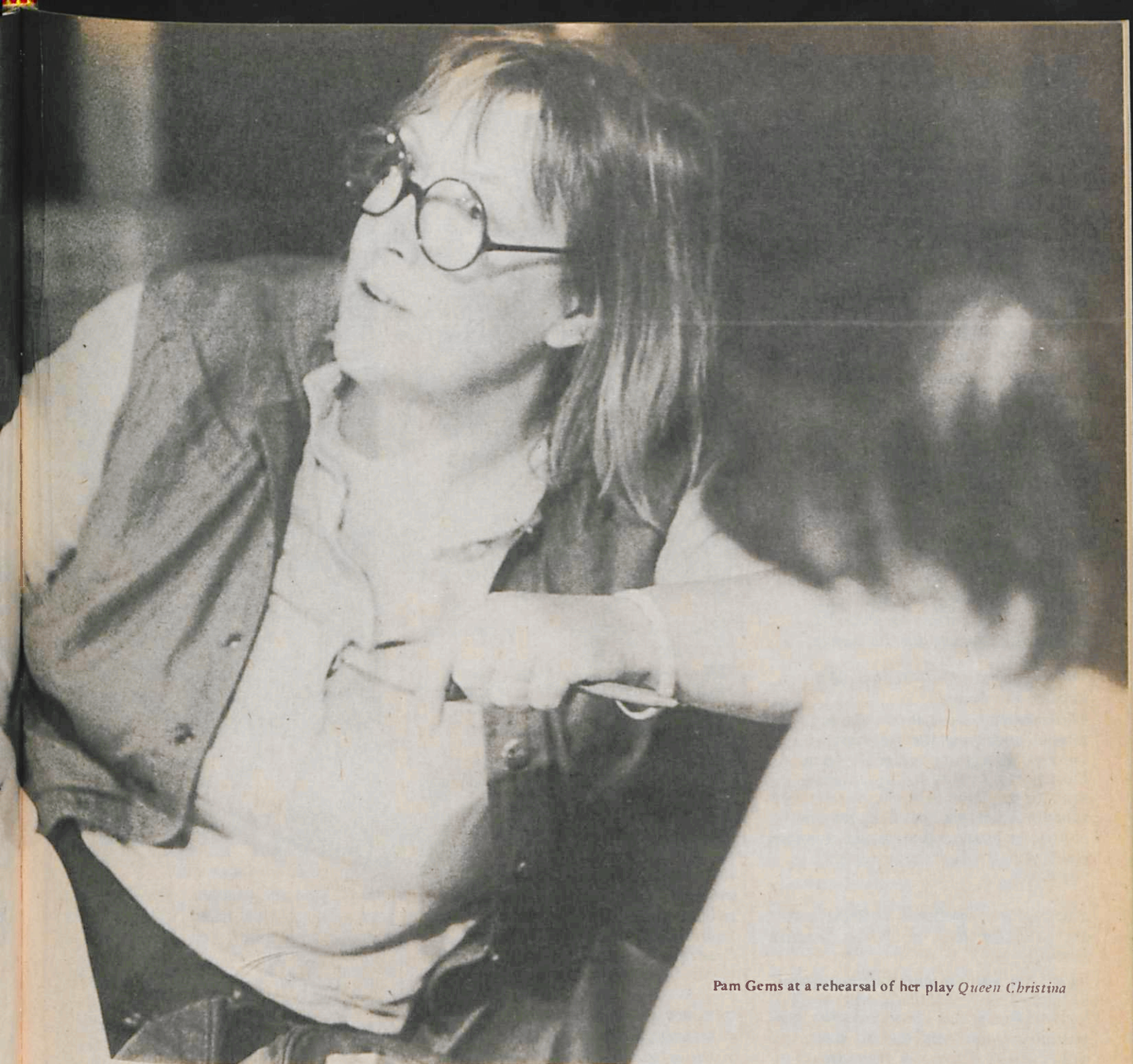
On September 9 *The Other Place* in Stratford-upon-Avon will present the first performance of *Queen Christina* by Pam Gems, directed by Penny Churns and with Sheila Allen in the title role. It will be a historic event, because it is the first play by a woman put on in Stratford by the Royal Shakespeare Company. This is understandable up to a point — the RSC in Stratford exists primarily to promote production of Shakespeare's work (if you have definite proof that Shakespeare was really a woman, please don't tell me as it will destroy my entire argument). But the RSC's London venue, the Aldwych has not done much better. Out of 167 productions since 1960, only two and a half (Margaretta d'Arcey's collaboration with John Arden) have been by women. Their record for women directors echoes the pattern — apart from Buzz Goodbody who died in 1975 — no woman director has been regularly employed.

But the RSC is not alone in this male artistic dominance; the pattern is repeated across the theatre generally — subsidised, commercial, repertory, fringe/political. *Contemporary Dramatists* (St James' Press), a compendious guide, lists 321 theatre writers writing in English all over the world; of these 34 are women, of whom 14 work in England. These dramatists were selected by an advisory board of 32 men and one woman — theatre critics are also predominantly male. *New Playwrights Directory* (Theatre Quarterly) lists information which dramatists themselves sent in, and gives a slightly more hopeful picture of the work being done on the radical/political/fringe: out of 120 writers working in England, 20 are women.

To explain why women have hardly figured as playwrights throughout history, while as poets and novelists they have contributed more significantly, one needs to look at the way the relations of cultural production work. The fact that by and large men have artistic and administrative control in the theatre goes some way towards explaining why women's plays are so often rejected as either 'not good enough' (artistic grounds) or 'not interesting enough' (often ideological or political grounds). Plays are accepted for production on the basis of content as well as form, and it is not at all surprising that men tend to be interested in subject matter that relates to them as men as well as to their social/political interests. This is as true on the political fringe as in the commercial theatre. Plays about the class struggle generally present men as the protagonists, and while this may be perfectly justifiable when a specifically male struggle (ie, miners at work) is the subject, it has operated as some kind of absolute aesthetic norm. Men writers often simply do not know how to write parts for women — a recent ironic example is David Edgar's otherwise excellent and politically important play *Destiny* about the far Right, in which apart from one or two token lines the women exist as decor. If every single woman character were cut from that play it would be more honest for declaring itself to be about the male far Right, without bothering to include token women as peripheral frills.

Another reason why women have themselves rarely been attracted to writing plays, as opposed to novels and poetry, may have to do with the relationship between the writer and the process of

distribution of the work. The texts of novels and poetry, once they have been accepted by a publisher are generally self-contained. A play is a more complex text. It is written to be performed as well as to be published (more plays are performed than are ever published). A playwright needs some knowledge of the theatre, if not personal involvement to be able to construct the combination of dialogue and visual action the form demands. Playwrights often work in as isolated a way as novelists and poets, but the work itself demands they have some active social and artistic interest in how their plays are acted, directed, interpreted. A woman writing plays knows that she needs to see herself as an equal to the other skilled workers who may be involved in a play's production — director, designer, etc. Women's role in the theatre is predominantly defined (and confined) as that of the actress, in her professional role as a character who is mostly secondary to male characters



Pam Gems at a rehearsal of her play *Queen Christina*

(rarely in 20th century theatre the heroine), and in her personal 'media'-relayed life by and large as a glamour pin-up. There is always a handful of 'serious' actresses, exceptions who help sustain the rule.

Thirdly, it may be that women find the play-form harder to relate to as a form of literary self-expression. A play after all, mainly consists of dialogue, of people speaking to each other in active social interaction. It is not that women do not know how to talk, but rather that the way women talk, and what they talk about, are seen as less important than the subjects men discuss and the way they discuss them. A play implicitly celebrates action onstage; women who are conditioned to a secondary passivity may find it harder to make use of the active theatrical form, and be more comfortable with the relatively contemplative and descriptive forms of prose-novel and poetry.

Since 1968, with the growth of

fringe and political theatre, and the women's movement, feminism has made some impact on the theatre. The male prejudice against 'women's' content has been countered by feminist theatre groups who have obtained Arts Council subsidy in their own right, and have very quickly found that there is a large audience for their work — men as well as women. Actresses have become dissatisfied with the parts written for them, and this has helped women writers to explore new subject matter — feminist and non-feminist. Pam Gems' individual break-through into the bastion of prestigious state-subsidised theatre is important not just for the development of her own career, but because it highlights the importance for all women theatrical workers of changing the male-dominated expectations of commercial theatre, as well as working in the relatively autonomous socialist-feminist potentials of fringe theatre.

Pam Gems was born in 1925 and spent her early life in a small village in the New Forest.

Both my grandmothers were widowed in the First World War and my father died when I was four, so I was reared by women. We lived in a very isolated way, on the edge of the marsh and we were very poor. I didn't have a bed till we moved into a council house when I was eleven. We lived off the land a great deal — in the thirties people got by in the country better than in the town. I remember my uncles poaching salmon, hitting their heads against the wall. Mother worked as a char, at a shilling an hour.

She and one of her two brothers won scholarships to the local grammar school.

Which caused local bitterness, and people were right, it seemed unfair that two people in one family should be privileged.

The whole system was divisive, exploitative and hateful. I left school at fifteen and had a lot of jobs in offices, shops, factories. I ended up in a glue factory where the money was grand. We all did a bit of whoring on the side . . . it was wartime, exciting, all those nylons and tins of Spam for Mum. Sheaths were the usual contraception in those days — jelly and stuff was middle-class, we didn't like putting stuff inside ourselves, it was a bit rude. I was lucky not to catch anything. A lot of the girls did get babies, there were some weird, quick marriages.

During the war she joined the WRENS as a cine gun assessor, processing and analysing film taken by camera guns in air-to-air firing. The end of the war was odd for those of us who had grown up through it — for a lot of us it had been a chance to travel, do jobs we wouldn't have done otherwise. Everything went slack, though we all believed in a fantastic new world — which we didn't get. As an ex-service-woman I got into Manchester University and read psychology, though I spent a lot of the time putting on plays. I'd always had a passion for the theatre.

What was your political consciousness at the time?

I was working class Labour, like my mother, which was still very daring in the styx. Everything was confused in those post-war days. It was a strange time for me; I was naturally, vegetatively anarchic. I tell you one thing, we were hungry for homes, children and consumer goods after the Depression and six years' war.

She met her husband in Manchester and in 1949 they moved to London and married.

I got a job with the BBC, doing audience research. I really wanted to write and I was told that if you joined the BBC, that was the way in. Then I had my first child in 1952. Till then I didn't think that getting married and having children was anything to do with me. But I must say I found having children fantastic — I would have had eight if I could. I'm a deviant.

The normal woman's deviation?

It's not very fashionable to want lots of children nowadays — no government in my time has housed people so they can have the children they want. I gave up work after my second child and, surprise, found myself very depressed in a London suburb. I wrote some plays for radio and television, with some success. I wrote one play for television called 'A Builder by Trade'. That was my first bad experience because they did it very middle class and I wanted it to be about working class people and nobody seemed to know what I was talking about.

In 1960 she had her third child and the family moved to the Isle of Wight. Then in 1965 she had her

fourth child, who is mentally handicapped.

That's something that's so shattering that only parents to whom it has happened can possibly understand. By and large society is very cruel to handicapped people.

How did that affect your writing?

It worked both ways. It cut me off totally from other people. But the lovely thing was that it made me work more than ever. I wrote some more TV plays, three of which were accepted but not transmitted. It was very demoralising. If I'd just had straight rejection slips I might have stopped, but for me there is also an obsessive side to writing. By this time I'd become totally imbued with failure and didn't really want the plays put on. I reverted quite naturally to the loneliness of my childhood.

Would you describe those plays as feminist?

Not consciously. But a friend who was reading my old scripts recently remarked on the pervading feminism. To me it's just the point of view of a woman.

In 1970 the family moved back to London as the youngest child needed special schooling. Did you have any contact with the women's movement by then?

Not really. I felt the movement was for younger women — flat-bellied, tough, radical women. I was fat, flabby and a failure. But I discovered the fringe theatre and I did start writing, or trying to write for the theatre.

She wrote an autobiographical entertainment called 'Betty's Wonderful Christmas', which was produced at the Cockpit Theatre in London in 1972-3. Then Pam was asked to write some 'sexy pieces' for the Almost Free Theatre in London.

I was so angry I wrote two monologues, black pieces, called 'My Warren' and 'After Birthday'. The first was about a girl who shoves her baby down the lav, the other about an older lady living in a bed-sitter who is sent a vibrator as a mean joke. I remember an argument with someone who thought them depressing, and therefore politically suspect. To me these two women were tough survivors; the older lady pulled the plug on her tormentors by prudently using the vibrator — waste not, want not — and the other girl was meant to be seen as surviving, though not necessarily in a way convenient to society. The plays were well received, and I believe that was because they were plays by a woman about women, and there is such a need for plays like that.

LAURENCE SPARHAM



Working on *Queen Christina* at "the other place", Stratford-on-Avon, with director Penny Churns and Sheila Allen in the title role

Then there was the Women's Theatre Season at the Almost Free Theatre, at which both Pam and I had plays done, in the autumn of 1973. We first met at the meetings to plan the season.

I was terrified, having been on my own for so long. It was very stimulating — I started to go to every meeting I could, political, minority groups, encounter. For the Women's Season I submitted a piece called 'The Amiable Courtship of Mz Venus and Wild Bill' — there was a feeling that we should go for a light touch, since they were all expecting those mythical Screaming Libs.

When the season ended, two different kinds of feminist theatre emerged — the Women's Theatre Group, which has done mainly agit-prop work, and the Women's Company, which was a changing group of professional women theatre workers, who put on a number of plays but has never crystallised into a permanent group. Some of the women in the Women's Company formed the Monstrous Regiment theatre group in 1975. The Almost Free season was a very exciting and traumatic time. You had this heterogeneous mixture of women —



rich American students, housewives, teachers on full salary doing it as a hobby, women interested in theatre for feminist propaganda reasons, actresses prowling round for work. In the end there was a split which boiled down to a gulf between the 'professionals' and the 'amateurs' — and I don't use the word perjoratively. There were among the amateurs people who wanted to come into the theatre — I was myself attracted to working with a group where I could get support; but on the other hand we had the professional dilemma of what was our position if we used non-Equity people in the plays? It was never really resolved.

The first play the Women's Company put on was 'Go West, Young Woman' which Pam wrote in a week.

Then in 1974 I wrote 'Dead Fish', and started work on 'Queen Christina'. I was fascinated by the fact that she was brought up as a man and then put on the throne and told to be a woman and breed. It was turned down flat by the two men in charge at the Royal Court. They said it was too sprawly, too expensive to do and anyway, it would appeal more to women. That got to me. I mean, would they ever have said, 'We can't do this play, it will appeal to men'?

'Dead Fish' was first produced at the Edinburgh Festival in autumn 1976. It then had a new production in London, at the Hampstead Theatre Club in London under a new title, 'Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi', received critical acclaim by the influential national critics (all male) and then transferred to the May-fair Theatre where it is still running very successfully.

I wanted to write about women now, women in their twenties who would almost certainly be mothers but for the pill. I do think that when the pill came in it was fantastic, now we can have equality, now we can have the phallic freedoms to screw where and when we want. But there is also the chemical and existential mutation. I wanted to show some women as they are now, against mechanised urban backgrounds, isolated in eyries, breeding sometimes, more often divorced than their mothers, reacting against modern commercial brutality by becoming anorexic, [self-starvation] a female disease which is a rejection of sexuality. Women who are the pathfinders of the new breed, trying to live the revolution with their fellers, and so often getting knocked back in what is still so inexorably a man's world.

The play has been praised by many critics and it is attracting large audiences. But many feminists (including me) have been critical of the way it appears to show the only political activist — the socialist feminist — as failing to have any control over her life; she commits suicide.

Since they're all aspects of the same woman — ie, any of us — it could have been any of them who committed suicide, a point which an enormous number of people picked up on. There was a political point in making it Fish. The character herself is aware that she is an agent of the revolution. Her middle classness is a cut-off and in one sense it kills her since she feels that it is improper for her, the inadvertently privileged woman, to ask for help. I did allow myself a couple of cracks at the pseudo-radicals who litter London, working the system and dirtying the coat-tails of the Left. No, that Fish dies in a moment of tired defeat is not, and has not generally been seen to mean a gigantic put-down of genuine activism. Fish, imaginative and warm, senses the most clearly the conflicting pressures on women now. We have to fight with increasing clarity for radical changes in society so that we can choose positively to breed.

But the four women are also distinct individuals, and each is making a different decision about how she is going to live. I think Fish is inevitably the most important character in the play, because she claims to be committed to social change, where the other three women are quite apolitical. And yet they are quite content to live without men for the moment while she kills herself over an unhappy love affair. That does seem to amount to some kind of pessimistic judgement on her.

I don't agree. The others aren't living without reference to men at all. One refers to her abortions, one has just been deserted by her husband, one is both prey and predator of men — a call-girl. And they are not at all apolitical. Being political doesn't mean yelling at meetings, often the reverse. But in any case, the play is not schematised in the sort of way you imply. It is not meant to be polemical, I have no feeling for such work which to me is often masturbation for the converted. Laying propaganda on people is ultimately fascist.

Have you felt more secure about your work since the success of the play?

The best thing about it is that it gives

CONTINUED PAGE 46

Miriam Yagud, feminist plumber, explains

HOW TO MEND YOUR TOILET

TOOLS & MATERIALS

Pair of foot print grips (adjustable wrench), junior hacksaw, small hammer, large plunger, file, medium size screwdriver, pliers, copper wire, various sizes of washers, bors white. Check which tools and materials you'll need before starting the job. All these can be bought from any good builders' merchants, plumbing suppliers or do-it-yourself shop.

PROBLEMS WITH THE CISTERN

Always remove the cover first.

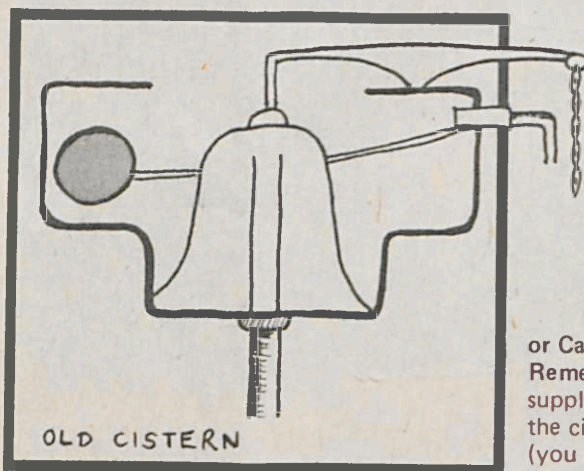
Overflow

Cause: 1. The water level is too high.

Remedy: Bend down the arm connecting the float to the ball valve, which lets the water through. Use a pair of grips or pliers, let the cistern fill up a couple of times and adjust the arm down till the water level reaches approximately one inch below the overflow.

or Cause: 2. The ball valve is worn out.

Remedy: Replace it. Turn off the water supply at the stopcock*. Remove the cap on the ball valve. Turn on the water supply slightly to allow a small flow of



water to push the bullet out. Turn off the water supply again. Unscrew the part of the bullet containing the washer (hold the bullet with grips and put screwdriver in hole). Replace the washer (check the size, but usually $\frac{1}{2}$ "), screw up, and file down the roughness created by the grips. Put everything back. Turn on the water and test the flush.

No Flush

Cause: 1. The handle on which the chain is attached may have got dislodged.

Remedy: First make sure the arm hasn't slipped out of its groove on the edge of the tank (A). Then check that the arm is still attached to the pin (B) on the stem which goes into the flushing unit.

or Cause: 2. Not enough water going into the cistern.

Remedy: Bend up the arm connecting the float to the ball valve (opposite of Overflow 1. as above).

or Cause: 3. On the old type of cistern failure to flush is usually due to large deposits of fur (lime) on the float.

Remedy: Disconnect the arm from the float, remove it and gently knock off the deposit with a small hammer. Put it back and test the flush.

or Cause: 4. Faulty diaphragm washer.

Remedy: Replace it. Turn off the water supply from the stopcock* and empty the cistern completely by flushing it (you may have to dry it out with a rag). Unscrew the nut (C) on the flushpipe and disconnect it from the cistern.

Also unscrew the nut holding the flushing unit in the cistern (D). In both cases use grips. Disconnect the handle from the stem of the flushing unit and remove the pin (B) from the stem. Lift out the flushing unit, inside which you'll find a round plastic washer (probably ripped). Replace the washer and put everything back. To prevent leaks it may be necessary to seal the joints of the flushpipe (see below). Turn on the water supply and test the flush.

Leaks

Cause: 1. Cracks in the cistern.

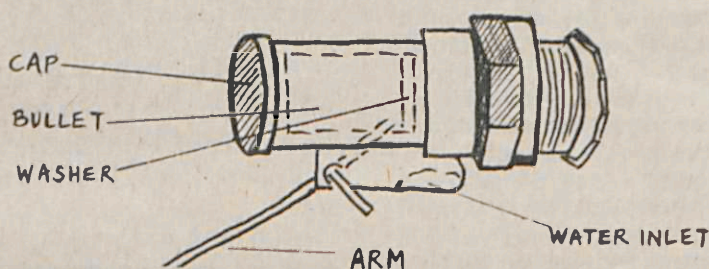
Remedy: Have it replaced (big job).

or Cause: 2. Overflow (as above).

or Cause: 3. Leaky pipes.

Remedy: Tighten up the nuts on the flushpipe (not too tight on plastic as it can cause it to buckle or crosstread) and at the water supply pipe connected to the ball valve. If tightening the nuts doesn't work you may need to unscrew them (but first turn off the water supply*) and either replace the rubber washers, or seal the joints by wrapping hemp smeared with bors white around the pipe. Screw up the nuts, turn on the water supply and test the flush.

THE BALL VALVE



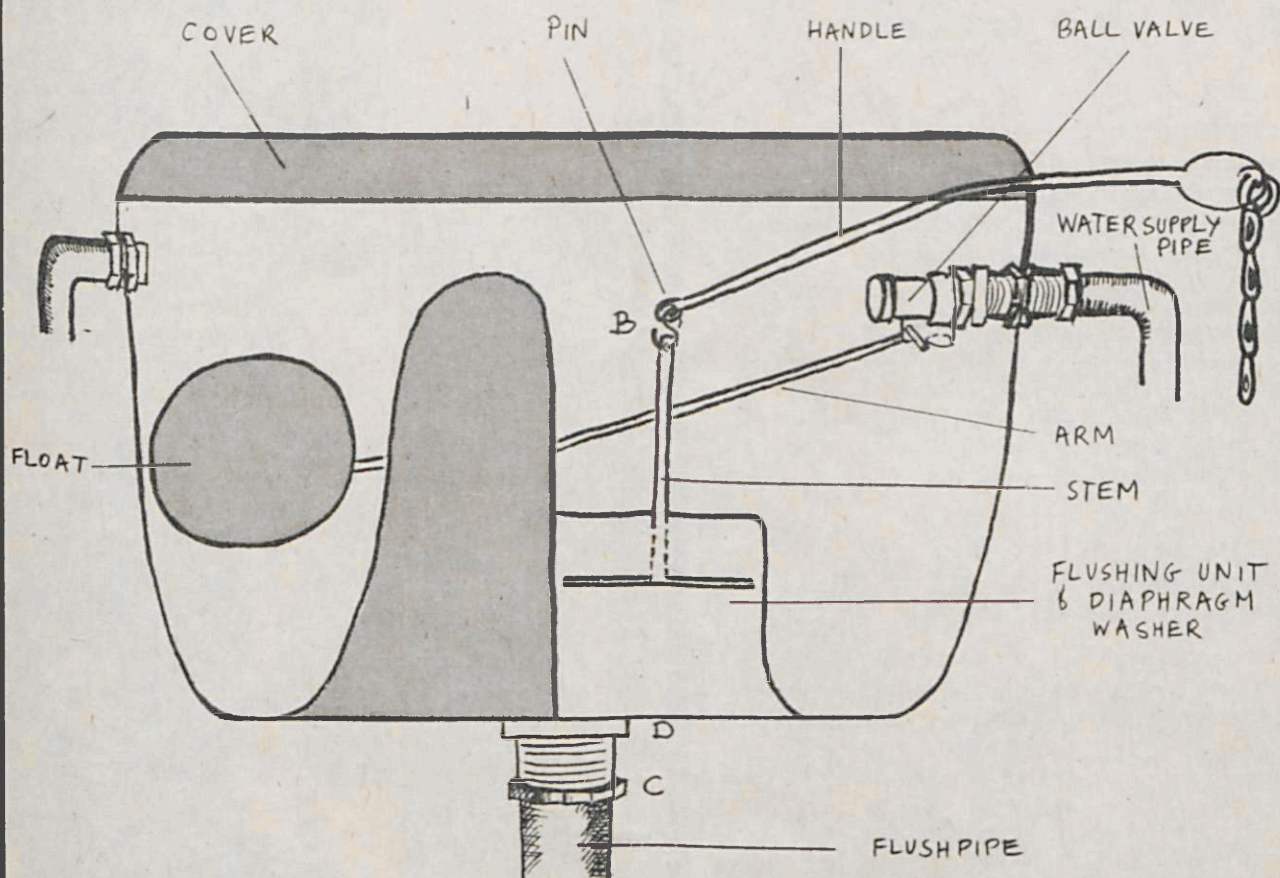
PROBLEMS WITH THE PAN

Leak on the flush pipe

Cause: Rubber cone perished.

Remedy: Replace it. There are two types of cones and they each come in two sizes ($1\frac{1}{2}$ " and $1\frac{1}{4}$ "). There is an interior cone which fits inside the back of the pan, and an exterior one which fits over the pan. It's advisable to take

THE CISTERN



your old cone to the shop to make sure you get the right one. Turn off the water supply* and empty the cistern. Disconnect the flushpipe at the top by unscrewing the nut with grips. Take off the perished cone and pull the flushpipe out of the pan. (The cone may have been wired around the pipe to secure the joint. Cut through the wire with a hacksaw.) Fit the new cone. With an exterior cone the narrow end should be slipped onto the flushpipe and the wide part folded back. Put the flushpipe back into position and fold the cone forward onto the back of the pan. If it's too

loose, wrap a piece of copper wire tightly around it. With an interior cone the wide end slides onto the flushpipe and the narrow end goes into the back of the pan. Screw up the flushpipe at the top, making sure that it doesn't leak (see above).

Broken flushpipe

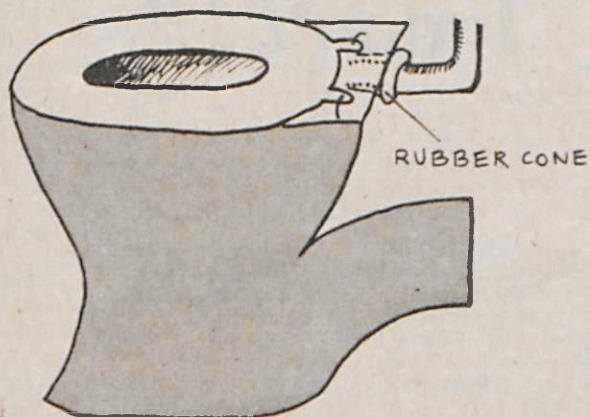
A new flushpipe costs around £1.50. They come in one, two or three pieces according to how high your cistern is. Follow the procedure as explained above for replacing the flushpipe.

Blocked toilet

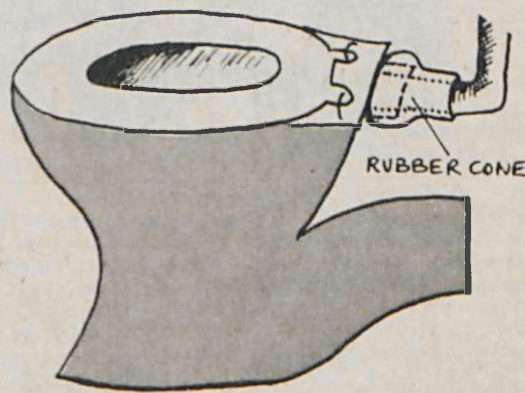
Put a large plunger down the pan. Make sure there's enough water in the pan to cover the plunger top, as this gives it maximum suction. Plunge vigorously. If this doesn't work the cause may be a blocked sewer. Call the Water Board or local authorities.

If you want to share your practical skills with other women write to Anny Brackx at Spare Rib.

* This is a tap which may be near the cistern, in the cellar or even outside the front door. If you can't find it, ring the Water Board.



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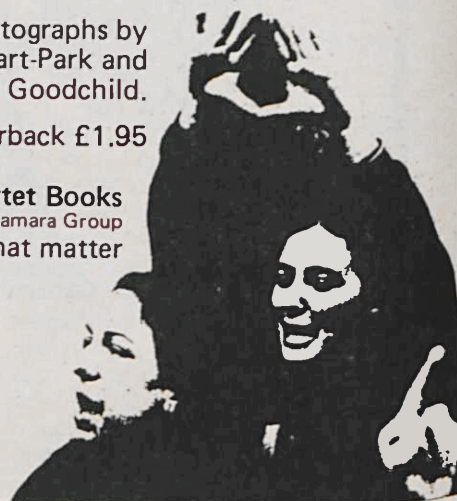
Conversations with lesbian women

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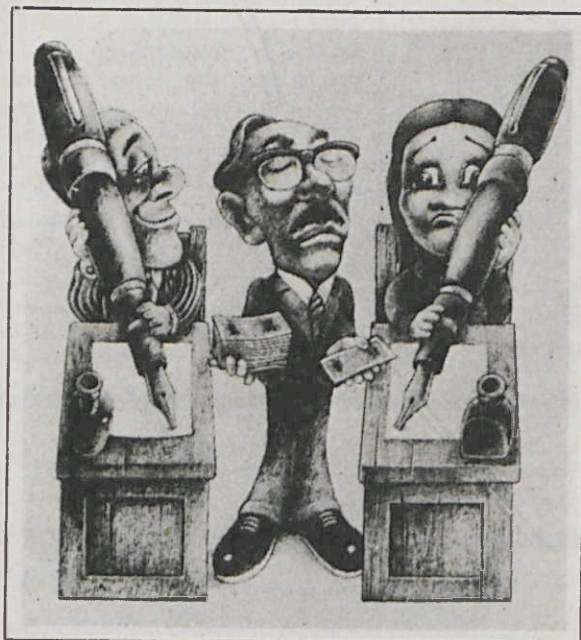
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NEWS

ANGELA PHILLIPS



A member of the Berlin Women's Health Group which produces a magazine called *Whisperings of Witches*

About 300 women already active in women's health groups travelled from over 12 different countries to the first international feminist health conference, held this June in an occupied convent in Rome. Angela Phillips and Jill Rakusen report:

Imagine discussing health and sexuality in a disused chapel — with children tumbling around in the dust that covered everything, and groups of women in every nook of the ancient building talking of childbirth, contraception, feminist health clinics, self help and much more. We gathered for informal discussions in a central courtyard where masochistic Northerners like us wilted in the first sunshine we'd seen for months, while our more sensible Southern sisters sat in the shade of a tree. We were concerned to discover that there was no creche, which created difficulties for women with small children, but this aside, it was the best conference either of us had ever attended.

The conference lasted a weekend, and each workshop a whole day so we had plenty of time to get down to our chosen subjects, and there was a degree

of concentration and informed discussion (translated into both English and Italian) that we have rarely met in a gathering this size. Perhaps this was because everyone there was involved in health issues and so had a real need for constructive discussion and information. It was exhilarating to hear about the number and variety of activities organised by feminists across the world. In fact we both left feeling a little frustrated at the lack of imaginative activity in Britain. So we were delighted to hear on returning home, about the anti-rape graffiti campaign and the actions of Feminists Against Benyon.

Perhaps the most vivid example of feminist action came from Geneva where the

women's health group has occupied their local hospital five times. The first time was to protest that only 'first class' people were allowed to use the garden. Now everyone can use it. Then they got more ambitious, protesting against the abortion methods used. Again, they were successful and the methods were improved, but a few months later there was a relapse so the women occupied the hospital again. Now they are teaching the vacuum method to medical students. They have very direct methods of monitoring the behaviour of doctors. Recently they leafleted the city with lists of doctors who did, or did not, treat their female patients properly. They also control the prices charged by the

doctors they recommend. If a doctor is reported to them for overcharging and refuses to reduce his price, they have a number of sanctions to apply, including graffiti on his house.

The group is one of a number from Holland, West Germany, Norway and Mexico which plan to open feminist clinics, though they don't intend to stop their other activities; as one member of the group put it, "We must continue our political activity even after we open clinics. If we don't, alternatives are a trap."

Clinics in Sydney and Rome
There was a long discussion about two feminist clinics already in existence — the Leichardt clinic in Sydney,



ANGELA PHILLIPS

"The medical establishment dislikes alternatives - particularly when they are cheap"

International meeting on women's health

HEALTH NEWS

Australia and the San Lorenzo clinic in Rome. What they have in common is an emphasis on personal politics. Both are trying to break down the barriers of professionalism to prevent the growth of a new medical elite. They don't see themselves as simply a service for other women; as one of the Australian collective put it, "We cannot solve women's problems, we are women ourselves." So they organise their clinic with flexible hours, plenty of part-time work and job rotation, so that no one is forced always to work in either the most stressful or the least interesting areas.

At the San Lorenzo clinic they had a re-think when they realised they were being seen as an abortion service rather than a political centre. Recently they limited clinic activities to three days a week covering mainly contraception and abortion referral. The other two days are spent in their own groups on research and discussion.

But the two clinics differ over the question of funding. The Leichardt clinic is state-financed. In fact the collective won't use voluntary help, so strongly do they believe that women should stop working for free. But they are in a pretty special position, with funding that enables them to employ ten workers full-time and up to ten part-time. Most group members have no formal medical training; they have learnt and taught each other through self-help. A doctor visits for a few hours once a week to discuss any difficulties and see any women whose problems need extra skills. One collective member is skilled in chiropractic (an alternative treatment which involves manipulating the backbone) and there's a big emphasis on herbal cures and self-help.

Though it would be quite possible for an Italian feminist clinic to be state-funded, the San Lorenzo group totally reject the idea. They fear they would lose control of their work because they cannot see the state tolerating the attack on the medical system inherent in their activities and organisation. They prefer to work part time in the clinic (there are about 30 women in the collective including a doctor) and do other jobs to support themselves.

Private Systems

The situation is more straightforward in countries where health services are funded through private medical insurance. Clearly, private medicine is no answer in the long run



Spanish women talk in the courtyard

because of the built-in inequalities of any system run for profit, but in such a system, alternatives are likely to be more popular with the public. For a start, they tend to charge less: this provides the initial inducement to women who might be cautious about going outside the medical mainstream. But the medical establishment has a powerful influence and dislikes alternatives — particularly when

they are cheap. The West Berlin group have already run into trouble trying to get their projected clinic off the ground. They were refused registration as a non-profit-making organisation because they refuse to work with men, they disagree with the state health system and if they discuss diagnosis with their patients they cannot guarantee that they will receive treatment.

Another group which hopes to get funding through insurance schemes is the 'Black

Moon' collective in Monaco. At present they provide services free, supporting themselves with part time work. The collective, who live in a communal house, aim to provide a comprehensive service for child bearing and rearing. They already have in the group midwives, nursery nurses and a home help, and they hope to start an ante-natal clinic.

Passing It On
Most of the groups were

involved to some degree in self help, and one common problem emerged: though women were eager to learn how to use a speculum and how to examine themselves, very few wanted to pass the information on by forming new groups or teaching others what they had learnt. Many women had thought this was their problem alone, and were surprised to find how common it was, yet gratified, as feeling less guilty and inadequate, they could begin to work out why.

The one exception was the group from Aix-en-Provence in the south of France. They have been doing illegal abor-

participate in "lesbian love" — this could "constitute great danger to body and soul" and corrupt younger women. The result was that the Marl women's centre was evicted from its rooms; women who might not otherwise have done so became aware of the threat that self help poses to the establishment, and a sympathetic Protestant minister offered his church community house for the women to use instead!

Opposition from the medical profession is perhaps strongest in the USA. In Tallahassee for example, the Feminist Women's Health Center has had to start a law suit against doctors in

that all feminist clinics will be protected from harassment. They are supported by several feminist groups who have formed WATCH (Women Acting Together to Combat Harassment), as well as by the American Public Health Association, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union and the US Justice Department itself. The Tallahassee case is being watched eagerly by feminists all over the world.

The New York Maternity Center Association, which offers an alternative service to that provided by hospitals in the area, is having similar problems: the state obstetrical association has initiated sanctions against doctors who aid the centre, and the City Health Department has been persuaded to withhold Medicaid licensing (state insurance for poor people).

An End to Keeping Quiet

In Ferrara, Italy, women from the Wages for Housework Campaign are campaigning against conditions and practices in the gynaecology and maternity wards of the local Santa Anna hospital. They too are involved in court cases. In their pamphlet *An End To Keeping Quiet*, they cite: 1) the lack of up-to-date technology (including monitoring and even resuscitation equipment); 2) the lack of personnel, both trained and untrained; 3) the resulting effect on both mothers and children (for example, one doctor found that of 92 handicapped children born at the hospital, "The absolute majority were caused at birth, of which more than 50% were attributable to the way the birth was completed . . ."); and 4) the insulting, cruel and sadistic behaviour of hospital staff.

The women are being taken to court for "insulting a professional body". They are retaliating with their own law suits accusing some doctors of misappropriating hospital funds (involving the illegal sale of placentas for cosmetics and the pocketing of fees which should go to the hospital) and also accusing the hospital administration of malpractice.

Women are becoming increasingly aware of the international nature of medical oppression and our relative lack of information to cope with it. For example, Italian women knew about high dose contraceptive pills being dumped on the Italian market and in third world countries where

controls are lax, but they did not know which pills were considered dangerous elsewhere. We need an international information network; women already involved in providing information agreed to coordinate material through centres in Boston and Berlin.

It was clear that women everywhere are channelling their anger at treatment by the medical profession into action. This also needs co-ordination, not only locally but nationally and internationally. Both WATCH and the Ferrara women need international support and Ferrara, particularly, want letters and telegrams of support for their trial which starts on October 18. □

Contact: Ferrara Wages for Housework, Via U. Bassi 13/a, Ferrara, Italy, and WATCH, c/o Tallahassee Feminist Women's Health Center, 1017 Thomasville Road, Tallahassee, Florida 32303, USA.

A full report of the conference will be available in time from: Gruppo Femministe per la Salute della Donna, c/o Spina, Piazza Monte di Pietà 30, 00186 Roma, Italy.

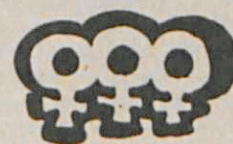
Well Woman Screening

LONDON: A new development in the campaign to keep open the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital on its famous site in Euston Road has been agreed as a result of a seminar held there on women's health needs.

The plan is to set up a women's health advisory service at the EGA, helped by local doctors, with the aim of developing a well woman screening clinic. This could act as a centre of excellence for all problems to do with women's health, and users would be involved in running it.

Any woman with experience of working in self help health groups would be invaluable in helping the hospital staff, Community Health Councils and local groups get this started. It will be on a voluntary basis, for the time being at least. □

Contact the EGA Action Committee, c/o Isobel Irvine, 24 Radnor Terrace, London SW8.



Self examination — learning to use a speculum (which holds open the vagina)

tions for some time, because the medical profession in the area won't carry out the new laws legalising abortion in France, and they've been quite successful in breaking down the 'them and us' service aspect of their work. Abortion provision is put very firmly in its political context and women are encouraged to learn how to perform vacuum abortions. So women who have been helped by the group in turn help others.

This open way of working has won them much support among women locally, support which stood them in good stead during their recent trial. The authorities tried to prosecute one woman but she was joined in the dock by five others — all insisting they were 'culpable' too. Either charges were unproven or the women were given suspended sentences — a tremendous victory. And the trial mobilised many women, not only in Aix, who understood its political nature.

Up Against the Establishment Women from Berlin told how, after they had demonstrated self examination to a group of about 70 women in Marl, negative articles appeared in local papers. These accused the women of inviting others to

the area. The long, complicated battle, which began in 1974, is about whether the medical monopoly of health care should be allowed to continue. Local doctors apparently wanted to prevent the centre from taking away their trade (it had charged much lower rates than they did). So they persuaded their colleagues to boycott the centre, thus threatening its very existence as it needed doctors in order to remain 'official'. The local medical association even threatened sanctions against those doctors who did not comply with its wishes.

In June 1976, the judge involved in the case said the evidence seemed clear that the doctors had tried to close the centre. Yet 12 hours before the case was due to be heard, he dismissed it. The women put this down to lobbying by the Florida Medical Association, the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The judge has since refused a request for a re-hearing and the feminists are now appealing to the circuit court. The next trial may not be for two or three years.

In filing an 'anti-trust' suit, the feminists aim to emphasise the commercial nature of doctors' work and to ensure

ABORTION NEWS

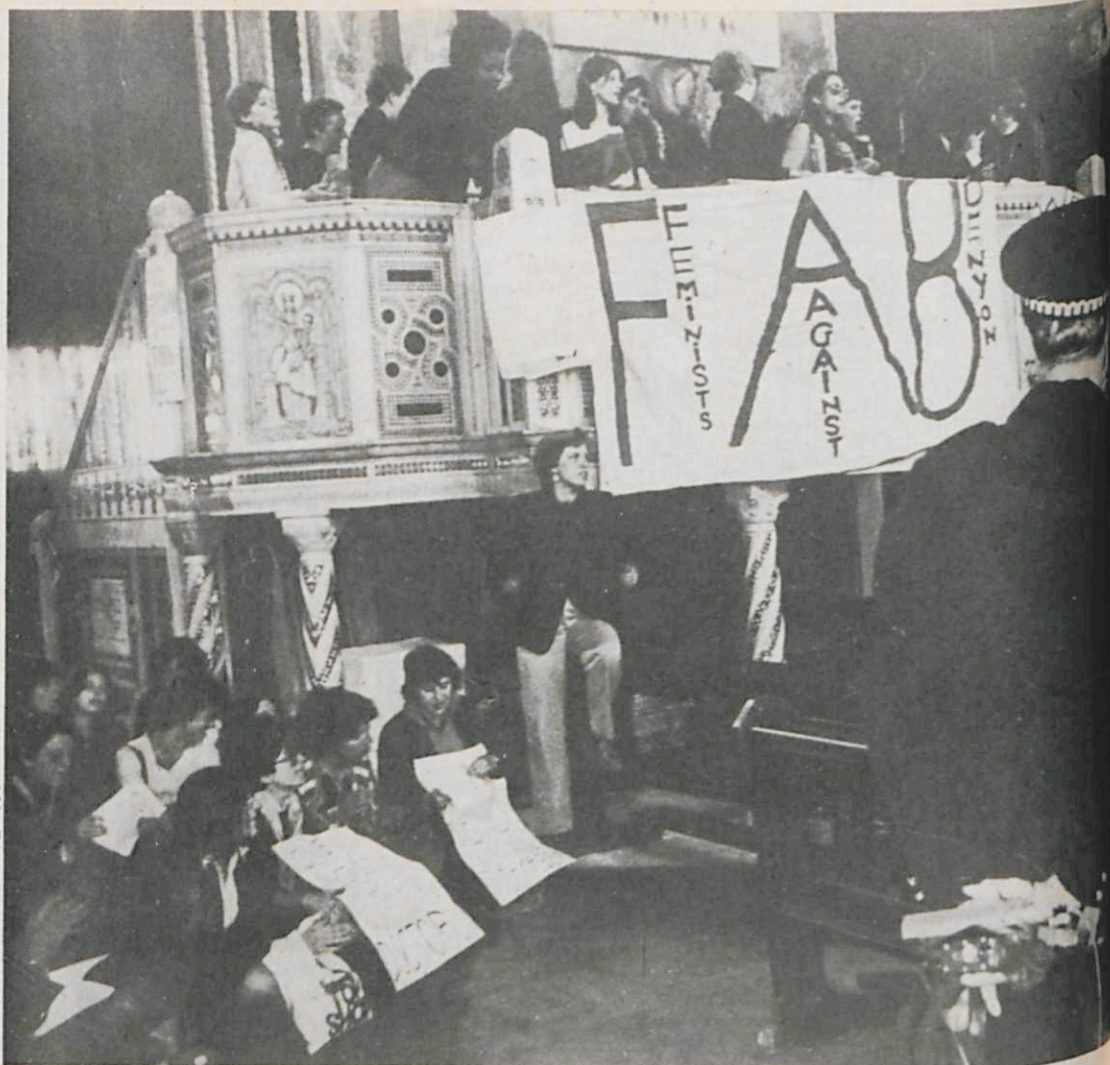
In the week before the threatened Third Reading of the Benyon Abortion (Amendment) Bill, many organisations broadly supporting a woman's right to choose lobbied, petitioned and demonstrated. On Friday July 15 the Bill fell. Seen for the first time that week was a loose new grouping — Feminists Against Benyon. What did they do and why? A woman who took part explains:

On the Tuesday six women seated themselves in the chamber where the Standing Committee was going through the Bill; after 15 minutes one stood up and shouted: "Feminists Against Benyon say this committee is a farce. Whatever you decide women will resist and fight. We have no respect for you or your Bill." As she did so, the five others blew up balloons with slogans on, let off party poppers and shouted: "This committee is a circus"; "Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide". The women were removed from the chamber by police to a cell where they were kept for six hours, then released without charges.

Two days later the Frost TV debate on abortion was interrupted by 12 women from the National Abortion Campaign and FAB, so successfully that Margaret White (vice-President of the anti-abortion organisation SPUC) claimed that the audience had been packed. When Frost asked people in groups fighting for free abortion to put up their hands, the 12 women did. Frost asked how many supported them — 300 more hands went up.

The next day 80 more women, many of them brought up Catholic, occupied Westminster Cathedral (the largest Catholic church in London) for an hour, singing songs and making speeches from the banner-covered pulpit.

On the Defensive
FAB existed only as long as that week's activities, but it came out of discussions round the idea of a feminist perspective on the abortion campaign. Many of us have always assumed that NAC is a feminist campaign because abortion centrally concerns women, and yet increasingly abortion is argued for politically more in terms of the



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

Taking over the Pulpit

unevenness of NHS provisions round the country, the fight against public spending cuts, the need for outpatient abortion clinics where only medical staff who are willing need work. Meanwhile SPUC and the opposition talk in terms of the right to life of the foetus, describing foetuses as "little babies" and pregnant women and doctors who perform abortions as "murderers". Their whole approach reveals a repressive and punitive attitude towards anything but marital and 'responsible' sex.

Our response has been relatively defensive: talking about contraceptive failures; denying their claims that women who have abortions are all young, unmarried and foreign; referring instead to married women, for example, whose families can't afford to have another child.

A feminist presence in the campaign would, it was felt, be oriented towards developing the immensely subversive potential in the slogan — "Abortion — A Woman's

Right to Choose". At some very deep level the fear of pregnancy plays a crucial part in the relations of dominance and oppression that exist between men and women. The slogan also confronts the increasingly intrusive aspect of state intervention in our lives (legal pronouncements on the age of consent, on the number of weeks at which abortion may or may not take place) and the perhaps more obvious area of relations between women and their doctors.

Opposing Institutions

That week's direct action was very much inspired by the example of women fighting for abortion on the continent — setting up clandestine abortion clinics, occupying hospitals, picketing the homes of unsympathetic gynaecologists. In Britain, the campaign for abortion has been historically directed at Parliament as an institution and at individual members in particular, so the Abortion Law Reform Association and NAC have been

reluctant to undertake activities which might alienate MPs or get a possible bad press.

FAB's disruption of the Committee took place on the same day as the ALRA lobby of MPs against the Benyon Bill; some ALRA members felt strongly that FAB should postpone their action lest it be adversely associated in MPs' minds with their lobby. The women in FAB decided to go ahead anyway, because their intention was to win national coverage in the press, on radio and TV of the critical stage the Bill had reached in Parliament, by voicing women's opposition to the Bill. The occupation of the Cathedral was successful as it necessarily focused attention on feminist opposition to all institutions, not just Parliament, which threaten women's right to control their lives by controlling their own fertility.

How to Handle the Press?

One thing which emerged clearly was the difficulty of knowing how to exploit the

◀ Police and clergy watch women take over the pulpit in Westminster Cathedral, July 15. One Feminist Against Benyon told us, "Afterwards we were in the pub celebrating. A middle-aged American woman came over and introduced herself, saying she was involved in the movement in New York. She said she just happened to be passing. Then her husband came up to join us, flashing £10 notes and buying us drinks."

"Some of us felt very suspicious. They were trying to pump for ring-leaders, involvement in other political organisations — were we Trotskyists or Marxists? — and what were we going to do in the future, did we plan more militant

action? They were very good at it, sliding it in. She had good credentials, talked like a feminist, claimed to know people. Afterwards we checked up — it was total coppers. I'm confident she was a hoax, snooping." So watch out sisters, we're being watched.

Slogan Fine

BRISTOL: Mandy Huckins was fined £341 on August 4 for spray painting walls with slogans against the Benyon Bill. Bristol NAC warn that political slogans incur much higher fines than vandalism.

Women picketed outside the

court, with a mobile mock-up of a wall spray painted with "political slogans rule OK", and handed out leaflets — "Without funds to finance mass publicity campaigns, women are forced to rely on the press for a public voice. However, where the press slavishly churns out establishment opinion, women have to resort to unorthodox methods of voicing their opinion." □

Bristol NAC and Women's Liberation are trying to raise the money for the fine. Any donations to Bristol NAC, Women's Centre, 44 The Grove, Bristol.

...& the stage

The General Will Community Theatre Company, previously funded by the Arts Council, has been refused a grant. Turned down by the Drama Panel for not being a group of full-time professional performers, they were advised to apply to the Community Arts Panel. That panel rejected the application for two reasons. The group was taken over in February by a lesbian collective and the panel "expressed concern over how the collective wished to push its own political view points — largely connected with the gay and women's liberation movements — rather than responding to the needs of the Bradford communities" (panel minutes). Presumably they think Bradford is an all-male heterosexual community. It's yet another example of the Arts Council pushing its own political view point.

The other reason given for the rejection was that the group were not "animateurs". General Will explains: "The Community Arts Panel believes that members of the community cannot express themselves creatively unless they are animated by professional experts. The belief of the General Will is that people who are oppressed and want to express themselves creatively do not need animating. They are animated enough. We don't believe in intervention." They stress instead the alternative notion of making skills available operating as a resource centre for people wanting to make shows.

So General Will was eligible for neither a drama nor a community grant. Criticised by the group for preserving such rigid categories, the Arts Council replied, "We have to have criteria." True enough, but it sounds as if their chief criterion is to keep the arts

static and non-controversial by distributing skills through Arts Council approved groups — groups that preserve the values of a state institution.

It's not only who they choose to fund but how they do it that reflects patriarchal attitudes. For months General Will was shifted between committees, dealing with arts officers who refer decisions to panels who in their turn rely on arts officers for information. Secrecy and delay characterised the whole affair.

But General Will have not given up. They've formed a new company, Moonlight Flit "out of the ashes of General Will. We have no premises, no money but a lot of people, skills and talent to make shows." □ Rosie Parker
Moonlight Flit, 2a Blenheim Rd, Manningham, Bradford 8,

Dirty Linen disrupted

Feminists disrupted a performance of Tom Stoppard's *Dirty Linen* at the Arts Theatre, London, in July. They were demonstrating against the play's sexist treatment of women.

The comedy centres around a House of Commons committee on MP's morals, and features Miss Gotobed who the protestors say, is portrayed as "a sex object, dumb and inept".

It could, however, be seen as a send-up of sexism, and energy might have been better spent attacking one of Paul Raymond's sex shows. But sending up sexism needn't involve exploiting it; one of the demonstrators explained why they singled out Stoppard: "Because he is seen as a progressive, thinking playwright and we wanted to bring home to his kind of audience what he is doing." □



LAURA MARGOLIS

potential of media publicity without allowing them to exploit us. We rely at the moment very heavily on individual women with contacts in the press for information about who to ask for when you phone to give a statement, what time to reach them by to be sure that the story can be in the dailies (if you're too late, you'll miss it altogether as it won't be "news" more than a day later).

More complex than that is how to cope with journalists when they ask for interviews. FAB decided to give a statement to the press as Feminists Against Benyon and to answer questions about what they'd done, but to refuse at all times to give their names. They were wise to make the decision together and in advance. A *Daily Express* reporter who met some of them outside the Commons began by offering his congratulations on the disruption,

then asked for names and addresses. When these were refused, he switched his charm off like a light and began to threaten — "Do you realise you are passing up the opportunity of publicity which could be extremely valuable to you? Thousands of people will be alienated by what you've done — you can't afford to refuse us interviews

National coverage can be worth a great deal, and all FAB's actions were aimed at getting it. In that case it's essential to take the press seriously, and to see that the way stories are reported is as much an area of struggle as the story itself. That means allowing no space to journalists to trivialise our movement by reducing it to "Blonde, petite Jean (21), a librarian from Cricklewood said . . .", but forcing them to listen to what we have to say and how we say it. □

'Women's Lib is women having their own ideas'

British Steel's branch in Greenwich has been occupied since May by its mainly male workforce. Elizabeth Wyse talked to two of the five women involved, Chris Enifer, a punch card operator and receptionist Jackie Hawkins.

The last straw was when six workers were sacked and seven suspended after a one day closure to enable them all to join hospital workers in a march against the cuts. Chris explained, "There was a proposed closure so we couldn't strike. We voted to occupy with only one against." All 70 shop floor workers joined — all men — and six of the 20 clerical and management staff.

There had been trouble before the occupation. Chris (18) and Jackie (17) were doing adult jobs on junior pay. Chris had finished training and was to get full pay after three months. But then Roebuck, Works Manager, said she didn't know the job well enough — she'd have to do another three months. After that, he insisted she go to the Sheffield plant for more training. When she came back the pay rise didn't materialise.

Jackie and Chris took their claim to tribunal. A form to be completed awarded points for areas of the job such as responsibility and concentration. The management played this like a game . . . You won that so you can let us have this one.

There had also been a lot of accidents in the factory. The safety precautions the company had to be forced to provide are minimal to the point of uselessness. Steel chips fly from one machine and several others are surrounded by heaps of metal dust. There are no extractors so in some instances the safety level of dust is 13 times the maximum. This dust causes Siderosis of the lungs, which not only is dangerous in itself but causes shadowing on X-rays, so if a tumour, cancer or tuberculosis is present, it cannot be detected.

On the day of the occupation

Chris was among those who went to Roebuck's office and gave him five minutes to leave. Now it's the workers' office and the files are in their possession. Secret files that refer to a time when there was talk of sabotage. Ex-dockers Ray Duffin and Joe Monk were blamed simply because they were ex-dockers; a note says that in future dockers shouldn't be employed. Paul Lutener also carries the can as a member of the National Socialist Front . . . he's actually in the Socialist Workers Party.

Chris was part of a delegation to Sheffield British Steel. There they were told they had a brilliant case with the files, but Sheffield was getting valuable overtime from Greenwich work and couldn't afford to strike. They blacked Greenwich's diverted work for a week. Great support was shown though by the Rotherham plant.

Ray told me that originally there had been 50 or so actively involved but the number had dropped . . . people applying for mortgages, living alone, getting married were forced to find alternative work. The backbone of the occupiers are married men and women who live with their parents.

Trouble at Home

Jackie says, "Paula had a do-as-I-tell-you fiance but she kept coming to the occupation right up until she got married even though she knew there'd be terrible rows. Christine who was a typist was tied to the apron strings, we were surprised she voted but she was really with us. Her parents came to the factory and more or less dragged her away because she would have ruined their reputation with the Tory Party. Eve does a lot of night shifts here; she's 30 but she's got parent trouble."



Chris Enifer (left) and Jackie Hawkins (right)

Chris says, "My mum's behind me all the way, it's just my dad. They listen to propaganda and think it's communists influencing me. When I ask my mum what she believes in she says exactly the same as me but she says she's not a socialist! My dad forbid me to come here, I've packed my bags a couple of times to leave . . . I'm not a child any more. This is what I should be doing. If it comes to a choice I'll leave home I know."

Jackie doesn't feel she could take it that far but she's having an even harder time than Chris. She's been threatened with: "If you walk out that door you're not coming back." "My mum's only with my dad because she doesn't understand. So many women know something's right but 'cause their husbands say it's wrong then it's wrong. I realise now that Women's Lib is women having their own ideas not being to look at, have babies and cook."

Chris smiles, "My mum says women will rule the world soon and I think — you're right! When we voted the men thought we just saw all those hands and thought we had to vote. In lots of men's eyes, women follow on to what men say and don't have their own opinions . . . we proved them wrong!"

"Some of the men have said they think we're great the way we've stuck with them, but they're glad we're not their daughters and if we were their wives we'd get a left hook."

"Their wives and kids aren't

involved, they don't tell them what's going on," Chris points out, "they go home and say, we've occupied love. What's she going to think — how will I feed the kids. If he sat and explained she'd understand."

"Yes, I had to ask Chris what occupation meant and some men didn't understand either," adds Jackie.

The first night the men thought Chris was there to make the tea: "I said if you want tea you make it!"

And they do.

No One Behind Us?

"Funnily enough it has changed how we are with our boyfriends." They both agree things have changed: "We'd go out and they'd say where do you want to go — we'd say, Oh, I don't mind (we'd think well, they're buying the drinks)."

Chris says, "Now I say where I want to go and I go half and half all the way. I'll never be put upon like I've been in this place. We've become more confident . . . if something seems wrong we say so."

Chris became Chairperson of the Staff Committee and they had joint union meetings with the shop floor. "The management didn't like that, they wanted us separate," Jackie adds, "They wanted us to be with them against the workers."

"I used to think Mr Roebuck is the boss and must be right," Chris admits, "then I became the Chairperson and stuck up for my rights."

She sighed, "I wish we

TRIBUNALS:

1. "Elemental" differences

Marianne Schmidt, dismissed from her job as shop assistant at Austick's Bookshop in Leeds because she insisted on wearing trousers to work, lost her case under the Sex Discrimination Act (see SR 58). Her appeal came up in London on July 26. Ruth Wallsgrove reports:

It was bad enough to hear the judge say, "I'm not afraid of opening loopholes in the Act" and, before he'd heard Marianne's whole case, "You'll have to go to the House of Lords" — but even worse were the attitudes of the woman barrister defending Mr Austick. She interpreted the Act so that virtually nothing could be taken as discriminatory: if a pregnant woman were removed from serving because her pregnancy "might cause offence to customers", there would be no case under the SDA because there can be no comparison with a man — men

can't get pregnant. An employer could tell women workers to wear bras and there'd be no case, as men wouldn't be in the situation of having a bra to wear... These kinds of arguments were backed up with the overall view that — "The employer provides a public service, and so is entitled to put over whatever image he wants."

The tribunal ruled against Marianne because: a) the detriment (of losing her job) was not sufficiently serious, the rule against trousers being a "simple requirement" with which she should have complied; b) there was no comparison possible between the men and the women since a previous Lords ruling had established that an "elemental" difference fell outside the Act; and c) an employer can use his discretion about public image.

Whether or not the law was meant to be interpreted so narrowly, with these precedents established, it is limited to only the grossest cases of job opportunities. Marianne Schmidt burnt a copy of the SDA on the steps of the court: "It's not worth the paper it's written on."

2. Vivien Saunders, one of Britain's top women golfers, lost her case against Richmond Borough Council who, she claimed, discriminated against her when interviewing her for a job as professional on their course. Her appeal has just been dismissed by the Appeals Tribunal, who said employers should be free to ask whatever questions they like in order to "reveal their true colours". But what's the point of giving them enough rope to hang themselves if there's no hangman?

3. An April decision by the Appeals Tribunal — that an employer can pay a new (male) employee more than a woman already doing the same job, if this is needed to "attract him" to take the job — has just been used again by Sussex University to win their case against a lecturer who objected to a man being taken on at a higher rate than her.

The Equal Opportunities Commission plans to take this case further. Interestingly, the first case on its way to the Lords, paid for by the EOC, is in support of a man who objected to women being allowed to leave the factory five minutes earlier... □

Cleaning Odd Hours

Forty pence an hour: that is what a woman cleaner employed by contract cleaning firms earns for working odd hours, early morning or late evening, with no overtime pay and one week's holiday after one year's service. If she's lucky she can expect 55p an hour, perhaps working for the same contractor on a different site.

The Low Pay Unit has investigated the situation of women working for contract cleaning firms, particularly in Government buildings and offices. They disclose that some women do two hours cleaning each night for roughly £5 a week. They are mainly married women with young children at home, unable to work normal hours. Most do not belong to a union — the LPU underlines the importance of trade union recruitment in the contract cleaning industry, and the need for a statutory minimum wage for cleaners. □

Dominique De Mazery

"The Brush Off" by Jill Sullivan — 50p + postage from the Low Pay Unit, 9 Poland St, London W1.

SCOTTISH OCCUPATION

KILWINNING, Ayrshire: 130 women and 30 men in AUEW, the engineering union, are occupying Essex International factory, part of the US-owned multinational United Technology. They want management to negotiate over equal pay with the company's other factory in Derry, N. Ireland, where men get higher wages for work done by women in Kilwinning. They also oppose a time and motion study the management tried to introduce without prior consultation. □

Contact Essex International Strike Fund, AUEW Halls, King St, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland.

were Grunwicks — all that support. Without money we can't go on. The point of fighting is to win. What's the point of carrying on when no one is behind us? The occupation may have to end in two weeks if money isn't raised. Why should we give up now when we've come so far? If we had some support, if we only knew someone was behind us." □

Contact Greenwich Reinforcement, 90 River Way, East Greenwich, London SE10 (first industrial estate through Blackwall Tunnel).



On the picket line at Batchelor's (part of the multinational Unilever) in Sheffield, where 600 workers, well over half of them women, have been on strike since July 8. Another 500 are on strike at Batchelor's Workshop factory.

Before the pay policy in 1975, they had a wage claim due. Management paid them half but still owes half — amounting to 10% of their present wage. So far they've been offered £2 of it, but only on condition that 40–100 jobs are lost. This would mean the women would have to work much faster — "They're wanting us to do 3,000 cans a minute on new machinery with less workers," one of them told Big Flame. "That's a lot of cans and a lot of stacking. There's seven of us on a line now — it'll be put down to three."

The T&GWU has made the strike official. Though small, the picketline has successfully stopped most deliveries. Electricians, fitters and office staff are still at work, but no production is going on. □

Send messages of support or donations to Vin Knight, 42 Grimsell Crescent, Sheffield, South Yorks — and don't buy Batchelor's peas!

Talks-Conferences

Radical Feminist Revolution
25 August. 7.30 discussion on the Edinburgh conference (held beginning July) on Radical/Revolutionary Feminism. At the Glasgow Women's Centre, 57 Miller St. (041-221 1177).

Guilty Men & Sick Women: The Medication of Female Deviance
26 August. 7.30 talk at the Women's Research and Resources Centre (WRRRC), 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-253 7568). Speaker: Susan Iles (Kent Univ.).

Women's Work & The Working Class Economy in Late 19th Century Leicester
2 September. 7.30 Feminist History Group talk at the WRRRC as above. Speaker: Nancy Osterud.

Women on Switchboard
2-4 September. Conference at Wick Court nr Bristol. Open to women who work in befriending/counselling agencies, and to those wanting to get involved. Residential full board £6; reduced rates for children. Details from Women on Switchboard Conference c/o 32 Hill St, Totterdown, Bristol BS3 (incl. s.a.e.).

National Women's Liberation Conference
3 September. 10.30-6.00 planning meeting at Chapel-town Community Centre, Reginald Terrace, Leeds 7. Accommodation can be arranged; creche provided (notify if you are bringing a child); tea and coffee provided; bring food. Contact Wires, 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2 (0532-35561) for practical details, and the Birmingham Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Rd, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12 for details of agenda and contributions. If you cannot go to the planning meeting,

send your suggestions/ideas/proposals on structure and content of the conference to the Birmingham Women's Centre.

Competing Ideologies of Reproduction: Medical & Maternal Perspectives on Pregnancy & Birth
9 September. 7.30 talk at the WRRRC as above. Speaker: Ann Oakley.

Feminist History Projects
16 September. 8.00 work in progress discussion for anyone engaged or interested in women's history. At the WRRRC as above.

All Ireland Women's Liberation Conference

Third week in September. Two day conference. Any women in the North who want to help and anyone interested in attending should get in touch with Eileen Evason, 10 Central Ave, Portstewart, County Londonderry.

Women Political Scientists
17 September. Conference at the Poly Of Central London,

New Cavendish St, London W1. Papers include Sexism & Political Science, Women & Politics, and The Status Of Women In The Profession. Organised by the PSA Women's Group. Details from V. Randall at the Poly of Central London.

Scottish Women's Aid
17/18 September. Conference at the University of Stirling. Workshops on the future of Women's Aid in Scotland, second stage housing, children in refuges, living in/working in refuges, support groups... Contact the Glasgow Women's Centre as above for details.

Supporting the Parents of Handicapped Children
23 September. 7.30 talk at the WRRRC as above. Speaker: Caroline Glendinning (York Univ.).

Fun & Music

National Abortion Campaign Benefit
28 August. 7.30 at the Roundhouse Downstairs, Chalk Farm Rd, London NW1. With Quintessence II and Blood Donor (new wave jazz). Tickets £1.40 (£1.20 for members). Details from Rose Shapiro, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303).

Haringey Get-Together
4 September. 3.00 at Tottenham Community Project. 628 High Rd, London N17. For all women interested in women's issues. Bring food, drink and music. Organised by Haringey Women's Group. Creche provided.

Penelope Isn't Waiting Anymore
An album of women's folk-songs by Peggy Seeger to raise funds for ALRA (A Woman's Right to Choose), ranging from beautiful American ballads of working, cunning and lost love, to industrial and union songs, children's rhymes and contemporary songs (mostly by Peggy) including *I'm Gonna Be An Engineer*, *Nine Months Blues* and the more personal *Song Of Myself*. Some of the chorus songs I found rather flat, and I have reservations about Peggy's views on the 'nature' of men and women, love and marriage, but basically a very good buy (and good value for money). £2.50 incl postage

from ALRA, 88 Islington High St, London N1.
Stef Pixner

Centres

Essex Rd (North London)
The centre is closing down, as the premises are being sold. Watch Shortlist for further details of where the group will be meeting in October.

South London
A health group is meeting at the new S London Women's Centre, 45 North St, London SW4. They've just started pregnancy testing but want to extend their activities.

A Woman's Place
At 42 Earlham St, London WC2 (01-836 6081). Open every day (not weekends) from 12.00 to 8.00 (except Tuesday until 7.00, and Wednesday until 10.00) to women for information. More help is needed to look after the office and to compile the London newsletter.



Publications

***Wedge**
Although issue one of this "Revolutionary Journal of Cultural Practice & Theory" contains several articles relating specifically to women, such as one about domestic architecture, what is more impressive is that the whole magazine appears to retain a consciousness both of women's existence and of the influence of feminism on the political critique of culture. It's so nice to escape from the token compartment labelled 'women' and to find an analytical magazine whose language is lively and accessible. 75p from 56A Shirland Rd, London W9

Gail Chester

Lip
Lip is a bi-annual feminist art magazine produced by a collective of women in Melbourne, Australia. The cover is in thick, silk finished paper — defiantly pink. Inside, articles range over embroidery, film, dance, jewelry, painting in Australia and overseas. Interviews and reviews manage to bring over general ideas about art as well as providing insights into individuals. The collective say they intend to cover "recurring imagery in women's art and politics." Two complaints — there's too much text compared to visual material and the design is consistent to the point of monotony. Nevertheless, it's well worth sending for.

Available from The Women in the Visual Arts Collective, 66 Carlton St, Carlton 3053, Victoria, Australia.

Artimesia Gentileschi

Secret Rent Act 1977
The present criminal trespass Bill allows unlawful occupiers to be evicted without a court order. This pamphlet suggests that it will not only be used against squatters but also against certain groups of tenants and licensees. Groups of tenants that could be affected are unprotected tenants, (including Housing Association and council tenants), and sub-tenants if they overstay the termination of their tenancy. Licensees that could be affected include those in bed and breakfast accommodation and short life property. The pamphlet suggests that landlords will use the police to evict people without a court order in order to evade the protection tenants have in the rent acts. Landlords will prefer to give licenses rather than tenancies so that they can evict more easily. Available from CACTL c/o Bowden St, London SE11. 20p + postage

Lynne Harne

Battered Women Need Houses
A report on the housing needs of battered women and their children. Published by Women's Aid Groups in South Wales, who have been providing refuge for battered women for the past two years, the report points out that refuges are only stop-gaps "inadequate, overcrowded temporary shelter" and that housing policies aren't

Projects-Campaigns

Women's Aid
19-14 September. National week of action "to demand more financial help, legal reforms, and recognition for the links between the battering of women and the way in which society sees women in general". Lots of local action is being planned: exhibitions and petitioning in shopping centres, street theatre, public meetings, filmshows... For details of activities in the Midlands contact Mo Murray (0533-823789); for other areas contact the National Women's Aid Federation, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1 (01-586 0104).

flexible enough to cope with the needs of battered women. Further information from South Wales Women's Aid, c/o 2 Coburn St, Cathays, Cardiff or Jane Hutt (Newport 56307 work, Cardiff 33827 home).

1974-1976 Herstory Of The Halfway House
It's a record of how a group of Melbourne women's liberationists went about setting up a halfway house for women who need somewhere to stay for a while; an account of the experience of keeping it going; and a documentary of public reaction. "Here we are writing about ourselves as women, our personal experiences in the Halfway House Collective, how we live and work together, how our lives are affected by our contact with each others' ideas and experiences, and how we use this as a basis for development of our political analysis and action." It's feminist history writing. 175pp; £3 from Women's Liberation Halfway House Collective c/o 165 La Trobe St, Melbourne, Australia or from Compendium Bookshop, 240 Camden High St, London NW1.

***Creches For Political Meetings And Events**
I'd be happy to leave my children in a creche run by the "class-conscious anarchists" who produced the bulletin, first in a series called *Child-care*. It's more than just a list of requirements for organising a creche. It begins with a coherent argument for having

Parents Anonymous
"We feel that mothers and fathers who have had to cope with the problems of aggression toward children would not only help each other by meeting and talking but could give incalculable relief to the many people who are locked in a private misery of guilt about their own feelings." Details from Parents Anonymous c/o 6 Tavistock Place, London WC1 or from Pat (01-643 6773).

Community Child Care
"Since April of this year a group of people from community nurseries plus other childcare workers who are interested have been meeting to discuss the possibility of setting up an organisation to support community nurseries and promote their aims." Contact Gill Pinkerton, Thomas Coram Research Unit, 41 Brunswick St, London WC1 (01-278 2424) for details.

Rights of Women
They are planning a series of practical/theoretical work-

shops to discuss women and the law (property, income, child custody, divorce) and children in care (local authorities). They are organising open planning meetings. Details from ROW, 2 St Paul's Rd, London N1

Women and Science
The Brighton group is preparing a book dealing with the problems of women and/in science, covering both ideological and practical (health attitudes and research) sides. They want to hear from any women interested in contributing. 17/18 September workshop on women and/in science. Details from WIS, 15 Camelford St, Brighton, Sussex.

Women in Newcastle
"Activities on Tyneside at present are fairly fragmented; lots of projects on the boil: food co-op, support group for Women's Aid refugees, Tyne-side Abortion Campaign, socials every other week (8.00 Upstairs in the Golden Fleece, Newcastle) and discussion groups on alternate weeks (8.00 at 233 Jesmond Rd,

Newcastle). For more information contact Newcastle Women's Liberation Group c/o Springfield, Marycastle, Kirkwhelpington, Northumberland (0632-811185)."

Women in Construction & Manual Trades
The group meets regularly and is compiling a register of women in construction and manual trades to facilitate contact. Get in touch with them at 23 Bridge Avenue Mansions, London W6 or phone Ginny (01-748 1407).

Women's Bookbus
The Women's Bookbus Collective plan a week's trial run, starting 3 October in Norfolk and/or Suffolk. The idea is to "take a van-full of feminist literature, posters, information to places where women do not normally have access to it". The Collective needs contacts and information, i.e. market days, names and addresses of local papers, groups, ways to advertise, help on the spot as well as money. Contact Sally Collings, 13 Aubert Park, London N5.

creches at meetings, points out the mystification which the word babysitting promotes and why individual childcare solutions don't work for most parents. The practical advice ranges from a sample registration form to illustrated guide lines to nappy changing. The list of requirements and suggested organisation for running a creche will either save a lot of brain-racking in the planning stage or prevent a badly organised creche with no one knowing who's doing what. Any group organising a meeting/event would certainly find this nine-page duplicated pamphlet useful. 10p + postage from *Childcare Bulletin*, 112B Forest Rd, London E8 (01-226 0817).

***Teaching London Kids No.10**
"In this issue of *TLK* we want to examine some of the ways in which sexism operates in the education system, in relation to both pupils and teachers and suggest some strategies for combatting it." Articles on opportunities for girls and women teachers, getting the sack, classroom materials and courses, a portrait of a sexist school, youth culture, football 'hooligans', the Hackney Flashers. And little gems like: Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross, To see a fierce lady upon a big horse, Knuckle dusters on fingers, And daggers on toes, She shall be reckoned with Wherever she goes.

Available at 25p + postage from *TLK*, 79 Ronalds Rd, London N5.

From Highness



Highness
The latest Counter Information Services Report shows how closely connected the queen and her family are with the state and big business, both at home and abroad. It is packed with facts about her wealth and the subsidies she receives from the British taxpayer. But overall it fails to provide a satisfactory analysis. This may be because CIS could not make up its collective mind as to who it was writing for, and therefore what it was

writing. It ends up as a cross between a text book and an agitational pamphlet. Anyway they leave you in no doubt that she's no sister! Available at 60p + postage from CIS, 9 Poland St, London W1

Janie Prince

* indicates that these publications are also available from the Publications Distribution Co-op, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.



People from Edinburgh went to the conference expecting it to be dominated by London

heavies all primed for a huge verbal punch-up, or coming North to smash a few porn shop windows (in the name of direct action), leaving us to take the consequences. Instead we had 200 friendly people, all apparently willing to talk and listen to each other. That may seem an anti-climax, but it resulted in people coming away from the conference with their feminist enthusiasm recharged.

This conference came out of a workshop at the National Conference in April on "The need for a revolutionary feminism — against the liberal takeover of the women's liberation movement." It was based on a paper by Sheila Jeffreys which seemed to suggest that what we needed was an "everything written down on paper" theory like Marxist theory ("the Das Kapital of Feminism") which would enable us to distinguish clearly what revolutionary feminism was so that we wouldn't ever be lost in a fog of liberalism. This blueprint/Manifesto/ten commandments theory didn't burst forth fully armed from the forehead of the conference. What we did find was that there were a lot of different people with a lot of different perspectives, at different stages in their thinking who weren't going to come up with a formula for 'right-on feminism' in one weekend, or any time. Most people I talked to shared the realisation that there were more questions than answers; that the history of the movement was a complicated toing and froing between theory and practice, practice and theory.

Definitions and Challenges

We also came up against the old problem of definitions: radical, revolutionary; women as a class; theory, theory and practice relationship. As always it was easier to define what we were not, than what we were. We all agreed we weren't liberal. We could see the danger of the movement being absorbed by society in campaigns whose only aim was to reform instead of confronting the patriarchy. Liberalism was defined by someone as "being scared to be a threat". Deciding together that we had to challenge this liberalism gave us confidence to be energetic.

The desire to confront the patriarchy led us to think about

'Men are everywhere, not just in dark alleys'

A conference called
"Towards a Radical Feminist Theory of Revolution"
was held in Edinburgh in June.
Lorna Mitchell reports:

what were direct challenges. What emerged was a lot of talk about rape and specific acts of physical violence against women in London. These came up partly because they were topical but also because they were symbols of the power of men over women. The threat of physical violence is the ultimate weapon men have against women and that threat affects our whole conditioning. Rape highlights the clear and irrevocable division between men and women.



In a workshop I was in on Sunday we agreed there was a danger in focusing too exclusively on rape and physical violence. We can't forget all the other ways we are oppressed. The problem in our thinking is to do justice to the complexity of life and yet maintain clarity about our oppression. Certainly we need to take action, but as always what kind of action? One suggestion I heard about rape was vigilante gangs beating up rapists. I had two problems with that: 1) I don't want to counter male violence with male violence. If we had to use physical violence, I would want it to be only one part of what we do. We can't forget the importance of working on our trust and support of each other, so that we aren't male gangs but strong groups of women capable of defending each other when necessary. 2) We have to consider the effectiveness of our actions. If we were mere violent gangs we could find ourselves threatened by the ultimate weapons — the

institutionalised violence of the police, the army. We could end up being defeated with far greater effectiveness.

We need theories that make it clear to us that when we fight male power we have to fight on all fronts: relationships, abortion, workplaces, schools, nurseries as well as acts of physical violence. Some women seemed to think that spreading ourselves too wide was the cause of the liberal takeover. On the contrary narrowing ourselves down makes that more of a danger. If we don't link all the struggles we leave them to reformists to take over. The talk about rape and violence has been important in reminding ourselves of what feminism is about: the struggle of women against the oppression of men. And that reminder has been necessary. But men are everywhere, not just in dark alleys.



The other main issue the conference made us think about was structure in the movement. The structure of the conference was carefully worked out by the planning committee: that we would be in small groups randomly selected. We would stay with the group throughout. We would all use the same list of topics, topics first selected at the planning meeting at the National Conference. The basic purpose of this, I think, was to bring us back to the organisational fundamentals of feminism. To replace male organisation, with its dominating leaders, enforced dogmatic unity and submissive alienated

followers, by small groups where women would be able to state openly their ideological differences and work out their thinking together.

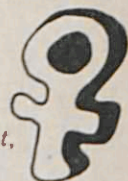
The structure in many cases broke down. Too many of us were too quickly pissed off with the groups we happened to find ourselves in. In some groups the dominators took charge and weren't dealt with (or couldn't be dealt with). In others the starting off discussions were superficial and some people couldn't wait to see it going deeper. Some groups didn't discuss topics that individuals in them particularly wanted to discuss. The problem, it seems to me, was that too many people had come with preconceived notions of what they were going to do, with a heavy emphasis on content — independent of the structure. Had everyone been prepared to work at the structure — sticking with their group after a short period of drifting — it might have had even better results.

But the overall effect of the conference was positive. In Edinburgh the "Radical Feminist Theory Group" had a post-conference open meeting. Large numbers turned up and we had one of the best political discussions in an open group for a long time. We decided to carry on meeting till we were ready to split into smaller groups. One suggestion, discussed enthusiastically, was that we should form small groups where women would combine consciousness raising, theorising, physical training and strategies for direct action in our area.

If we sustained the energy evident in this meeting the network envisaged at the end of the conference would actually mean something. □

CORRECTION:

The contact address for groups in London is c/o A Woman's Place, 42 Earlham St, WC2 (postal address only).



FEMINIST SPIRITUALITY:

"Goddess Shrew" was accidentally left out of the publication list. It's available from the Matriarchy Study Group, 15 Guildford St, London WC1. 40p inc p&p.

In our last issue in the feature 'The message in the spike heel' we reproduced two photographs which are the copyright of '19' magazine (IPC Magazines Ltd). We regret we omitted to mention this.

Rape rally in Trafalgar Square — Wages for Housework, the disputed Women for Life banner and voyeurs . . .

... "but the weight of women's pain and anger won through"



Rape Rally Wrangle

It seemed like such a great idea: a public rape trial of Roskill, Wein and Slyn, the judges who backed Holdsworth, the "Queens Guard Rapist" (see SR 61). With testimonies from Carol Maggs, the raped woman, and as many other women as felt strong and angry enough to speak out at last. It seemed that after years of quiet, supportive action and discussion about rape, the women's movement could finally surface in a spectacular public action.

I probably expected too much.

The trial in London's Trafalgar Square on July 16 was in fact organised by only one tendency, Women Against Rape, part of the Wages for Housework Campaign. The Rape Crisis Centre in London and all the rape action groups around the country had only three weeks notice. Many decided to stay away (see comments below from Bristol Anti-Rape Group); others attended to show solidarity and give women information about their own work. But inevitably the full spectrum of feminist politics was missing.

Disastrously, even those of us who went were split by the presence of Women for Life, the anti-abortion group, who claimed that

even a raped woman should have no right to abortion. Women from North Camden National Abortion Campaign refused to march with them: "We are not trying to say that we are more feminist than other women but we refuse to compromise our commitment to a woman's right to choose. Rape cannot be seen outside the context of women's control of their sexuality."

Even more disastrously present were the ranks of lip-smacking male journalists at the assembly point, making it impossible to dispute the politics of the march without presenting a luscious spectacle of female disunity.

Even the trial itself was seen as titillation at first — cameras snapped and men heckled all

over the Square. But gradually the weight of women's pain and anger won through. Carol Maggs said the humiliation of the court was as bad as the rape itself. The prosecution had gone over every item of her clothing describing their "indecent", suggesting that even her torn bra could have been put on in advance — presumably inciting Holdsworth to attack her!

A woman who'd worked as a stripper to support her family stood shaking as she tried to tell us how a judge had said that "someone like her would suffer no permanent damage". A woman who'd been raped as a minor, made pregnant and put to the public torture of a six-hour standing cross-examination, told us how she'd felt as she joined women invading the courtroom to confront Roskill. This was really speaking bitterness — the voyeurs faded away and the Square seemed full of women. Many had been raped themselves, they'd heard about the trial from newspapers and the radio. We kept on waiting and listening for two and a half hours. But then as one Wages for Housework speaker followed another, rape became a cosmic generalisation, always tied back to women having no money — it became the rape of justice, rape by low wages and corporal punishment, the whole of a woman's life was rape (just as in 1976 it was prostitution and in 1975 it was housework).

There were some exciting speeches from Wilmette Brown — the only one to speak of women taking justice into their own hands — and from Priscilla Allen — the only one to talk about rape as a part of "normal" sexual relations. But a lot of the WFH speakers seemed to shy away from sex into other services women have to perform. It was like going back to the movement's early days when we only dared confront women's oppression

"Every woman must have the financial independence she needs in order to leave a situation where she feels in danger of rape. She must have the money and therefore the social standing to defend herself from a husband or individual man and from any judge, police officer or doctor biased against her." — WAR
Do you wave a wad of notes at him and hope he changes his mind? If you can afford to catch a taxi, you could be raped by the taxi-driver; women are dragged from cars and raped; they are raped at home.

"Rape, like charity, begins at home. This is because women's poverty begins at home. As long as our work has no value, our feelings have no value to rapists, doctors, employers, courts . . . We are demanding an end to the servitude of housework, of the assembly line, of the typing pool, of the hospital and of the school . . . We want wages for our work at home so that we can refuse rape wages outside the home." — WAR
But rape doesn't occur just because women don't have money. And why use the word rape so generally and insensitively?

by "Government and Industry" not by men.

I hope the organisers learned something from Jayaben Desai, called to give an account of "rape by low wages" at Grunwick, who instead showed how closely economic exploitation and sexual coercion are linked. In her factory foremen lord it over young Asian women, withholding increments from those who refuse to come across sexually.

If only women from the Square had been able to testify, so many more insights could have been shared. We need more public protests where all women feel free to make their anger heard. The judges haven't changed, for sure: last month Judge Mervyn Griffith Jones laid a man's rape at the door of parents "who allowed their young daughters to act as harlots". □

Amanda Sebestyen

'Why we didn't go..'

The Bristol Anti-Rape Group, who've been meeting and working around rape since the National Conference, decided not to go to the WAR demo. "It is quite clear to us from the analysis presented by Wages for Housework that they have not seriously discussed the issue of rape. The rationale, as usual, is that if women had money they could not get raped..."

"Speak-Outs against rape have a certain herstory; they were originally women-only events in which we confronted the damage by rape, spoke of it, asserted our anger and decision to take action — by strategies for growth, in both the personal and the political sense. They were not publicity tools in the sense that this demonstration is, no one was being used for political ends."

The Bristol group suggest "a nationwide demonstration against rape, either in the form of a day or a week of action, which could give a focus to our mounting energy as well as draw in many more women to this struggle."

The London Rape Group say: "We hope that the issue of rape does not become the partisan 'property' of any one group. There are several groups existing and active and we hope more will be set up. We disassociate ourselves from the analysis and the methods of WAR. We intend to put forward proposals to the next National Conference and hope other women's groups will do so too." □

'Join the Professional Rapists'

MANCHESTER: In protest against the freeing of Tom Holdsworth, various buildings were spray-painted — including the Army Recruiting Office ('Join the Professional Rapists' and 'The Regular Army are Regular Rapists') and the Manchester High Court and Crown Court main entrances ('Raped Women Demand Justice' and 'Queen's Guard Rapist — Freed!').

Two women, Michèle Goepfert and Lesley Mair, were picked up and appeared at the Magistrates' Court next morning, July 7, charged with criminal damage. Both refused to see the duty solicitor and chose to represent themselves. They pleaded that they were guilty only in the court's eyes, not their own. Lesley spoke of the bias against women in the man-made and -administered legal system and declared that her action had been provoked by men violating women. Michèle pointed out that the most effective channels of communication are largely closed to women, and therefore, if we are not to remain unheard, it is necessary to register a protest in a public place.

The magistrate was unmoved by their arguments: "I'm going to treat you in precisely the same way as the naughty little boys who write MUFC on walls," and offered them the possibility of cleaning the wall — which they declined. He did, however, agree to Lesley's demand that the prosecution's repeated references to 'girls' be changed to 'young women'. They were fined £15 each, plus £3.50 cleaning costs.

Although news of Lesley's and Michèle's detention in the Manchester Central Detention Centre only became known at 7am, within two hours 30 women were picketing outside the Magistrates' Court, with placards and leaflets. Passers-by were unusually sympathetic and local media gave surprisingly good coverage to both case and picket. Michèle and Lesley felt that the strength and support of Manchester women not only gave them confidence in court, but also turned what could have been merely a magistrate's snub into much-needed publicity for the real issues of rape. □

Three Irish women talk about their sons' deaths

Ms Norney, Ms Stewart and Ms McCooley are three Catholic women from the Turf Lodge district of Belfast. They have all had a son killed by the British Army in Northern Ireland. The boys, aged 13, 17 and 22 respectively, have never belonged to or been active in a republican organisation, though in all three cases the army issued statements describing them as "snipers", "gunmen", assaulting and resisting arrest.

Talking about their sons' deaths has meant countless anguished re-enactments of a grief they would prefer to withhold for the sake of their other children. As members of the Mothers Action Committee in their area, they came to London in July, invited by the Campaign Against British Brutality in Ireland (CABBI) to highlight the circumstances surrounding their sons' deaths. The Women and Ireland group asked them to talk at A Woman's Place, Earlham Street.

Joan Lally reports:

They entered shyly, glancing at the myriads of dazzling posters and then sat down with a determination that was to mark our meeting.

Leo Norney, aged 17, was shot after he'd seen his 16-year-old girlfriend home — the Ministry of Defence has now admitted he was totally inno-

cent. His mother has been offered £3,000 as compensation, and the army has claimed all liability. Ms Norney has refused such "compensation": "I don't want their money; no way do I want it. I only want justice for my son's death — when you think that the man who killed him is already doing



Sussex Vigil

BRIGHTON: Women Fight Rape held a 29 hour vigil at the end of July — one hour for every rape reported in Sussex in 1975. These were the latest figures available — not all 29 reached court or got convictions; how many more were never even reported?

From 10am on Friday to 3pm on Saturday some 30 women stood with placards, petitions and banners —

"One or two beery

blokes wandered up in the night, but we just told them to piss off. There was no heavy violence. One bloke came and kicked the placards over."

The vigil, which got a lot of local publicity, ended with a big march on Saturday afternoon up Western Road, Brighton's main shopping street. "The march fizzled out a bit at the end," said one sister, "but response from women was very good and several new women have turned up to Women's Centre meetings as a result." □



Annie Norney (left) and Kathleen Stewart (right)

five years in a prison in Scotland for a much lesser charge, 'planting' bullets on innocent civilians, I think he should be brought back and made to face justice. Five hours after my son's death my house was raided from top to bottom. Leo was never mentioned, but on their way out, they made me sign a form saying 'No damage done'."

Brian Stewart, 13, was killed when soldiers opened up with plastic bullets in his street. One smashed Brian's skull and he died a week later. Said Ms Stewart, "I gave him 3p and he went out to the shop after he'd done his homework. Three minutes later I heard he'd been shot. The following night, Major Tom Sewell appeared on television and labelled my child a 'notorious stone-thrower' who had been leading a rioting mob of 400 people."

Danny McCooey died on May 20, having received internal injuries when a soldier struck him in the stomach with a rifle butt. The army claim Danny was "violently resisting arrest".

After Brian's death, Roy Mason made a statement on TV about the "Godfathers in Turf Lodge who were sending young children out to do terrorist acts." Said Ms Stewart, "There are 7,000 people living in Turf Lodge. We can't keep our children prisoner day and night! And it's the children the army are after. I've lived in Turf Lodge for 16 years. No one there sends children out to face men with guns. Now the army patrols have stepped up to coincide with the kids going and coming from school! And even if some of the kids throw stones, the soldiers immediate-

ly occupy houses on the street so the houses and families become the targets, not them!"

Ms Norney works full-time in a local hospital. Describing her life since Leo's death in 1975 she said, "I take both my sons aged 19 and 22 to work every morning and then go back and pick one of them up at 4.30pm and get the other one at 6pm. I never let those two go out anywhere at all except for once a week to our social club, even then I drive them there and pick them up at closing time. It's not our men and our boys causing the trouble, or us. It's the British Army and as we say in Northern Ireland it's only a training centre for what's bound to happen in Britain. You've seen them yourselves with the Glasgow dustbinmen and lately at Grunwicks. We've been living with that in the North for

years now. It doesn't seem to be getting through over here at all, and in my firm opinion no one over here wants to know! There are no Loyalists in our area so they're not protecting us from anything. And as for people talking about a bloodbath — there's already been a bloodbath with over 1,500 people killed since this began. But the sad thing is they're only kids themselves that they're sending over now; some of them look like they've just left school."

"Betty Williams of the Peacewomen? Where I come from we call her 'Jaws'."

When asked about the Peace Movement, all three women looked at one another, "That lot are the 64 dollar question," said Ms Norney, "you don't know where to start with them. About Betty Williams... we call her Jaws for short... when she was asked on television if she 'feared the men of violence' she said of course she did. But what she meant by the men of violence were the paramilitaries and the republicans; not a word from her about the army. I can tell you now that she condones what the British Army does, cause after all they set her up. We couldn't get an office like she has and four or five buses for a march at the drop of a hat. God, we'd have to wait a month to get a bus. You ask Mrs Stewart. When her young son was killed the mothers of Turf Lodge organised a meeting and invited Mairead Corrigan to come along. They didn't have the time; nor did any of us have a postcard of

NOTTINGHAM: After the recent Midlands sexuality conference, a week of action around rape was organised. In Nottingham women put up posters and got space on two radio programmes. "We gave leaflets out in the lunch hour to women only (except when men hassled too much)," said Jo Brewer of Nottingham women's group. "On the Saturday we all went into a shopping area, gave out more leaflets and had a few banners. Two girls of about 12 said that two men had tried to rape them." □

Rape Crisis Centre 01-340 6913
Women Against Rape
01-624 6364
London Rape Group
c/o 42 Earlham St, London WC2
Contact your local
women's centre or WIRES
(c/o 30 Blenheim Terrace,
Leeds 2) for information
about out-of-London groups.

TASS Anti-Rape Ideas

The Executive of TASS, staff section of the engineering union, has protested to the Home Secretary about the Holdsworth judgement and proposed legal changes:

- 1 a "consistent sentencing policy" for rape and sexual assault;
- 2 reforms in the selection of magistrates, "to ensure that they represent a cross section of the public and in particular a proportionate number of working women";
- 3 composition of selection committee for magistrates to be made public;
- 4 public money for research into the prevention of sexual assault and rape;
- 5 financial assistance to Rape Crisis and counselling centres;
- 6 raped women not to be questioned by police without the presence of a friend, relative or counsellor. □

JAILED VICTIM OF INCEST

Noreen Winchester is now in Armagh women's prison in Northern Ireland, sentenced to seven years for the 'manslaughter' of her father.

From the day of her mother's funeral, when she was 13, Noreen was raped by her father, who threatened to kill her, her brother (9) and two sisters (6 and 7) if she told the police what he was doing.

In 1975 when she was 17, she met Dermot Farrar and they planned to marry in April 1976. Noreen's father then said they need not be careful any more — if she got pregnant everyone would think it was Dermot's child. Noreen tried to ward him off but he raped her again. Desperate, the next night when he came home drunk, she put a knife in his neck. Passing sentence, the judge said she had been "a willing partner for years" and had had "plenty of time to go to the

police about the incest" — showing a complete lack of understanding of pressures within the family.

An international feminist campaign has started to fight for Noreen's release. Other raped women in the USA who retaliated against their attackers and got heavy sentences, have been acquitted by higher courts after feminist publicity campaigns: Inez Garcia who killed one of the two men who raped her; Joanne Little who was to be hanged for killing her rapist.

This campaign is being co-ordinated by the Noreen Winchester Committee, Gerolaan 52, Zeist, Holland — they want postcards demanding Noreen's release. Irishwomen United are organising support — contact them at PO Box 909, Dublin. We hope to publish a contact address and ideas for action in Britain next month. □

sympathy from them for the loss of our sons."

The Mothers Action Committee has become the main focus of activity for most women living in Turf Lodge. Since Brian Stewart's death when the committee was formed, women have taken to the streets with whistles and bin-lids to inform a neighbourhood of an approaching army patrol. They also see it as a way of keeping very young children alerted to the possible harassment from soldiers. In the last 18 months the campaign round the question of political status for prisoners in the North has taken shape as the Relatives Action Committee. Again it's women who are mainly involved. "Several women have stood and fasted with nothing on save a blanket just as their sons are doing to expose what's going on."

"They just have to show you their khaki uniform and they can do anything they like." Further cups of tea as more women who'd been "Browsing at the Workshop" on a sunny afternoon became involved in the discussion. "They're getting away with anything they like," Ms Stewart continued. "They don't need permission either, what with the Special Powers. The army is law in Northern Ireland. Even their command-



How the army sees women — front cover of *Soldier*, April 1976

ing officers can't control some of them."

Rape cases involving British soldiers who have served in the North at some stage have increased. The repercussions for women in Britain are becoming obvious. Take Peter Langley, 19, a guardsman, who got a maximum of seven years for raping a 42-year-old woman in Surrey twice at bayonet point, leaving a decoy note saying "Taken by the IRA" when he kidnaped her. All three women have suffered constant foul-mouthed abuse passing patrols in the street. They've been knocked up and searched at

all hours of the morning and night. They were anxious that more details of rape cases in which the army were involved should be published in both Irish and British press.

In several rape cases, soldiers have been welcomed back by commanding officers as though they'd simply been away for a long weekend with the boys. Private Roger Search, for instance, was found guilty of raping a woman while on patrol duty in Strabane. The woman was then raped by two other privates who got a maximum of nine months. The army welcomed all three back ceremoniously (*Irish Press*, Jan 25). In the face of the law, women who've been raped are seen merely as casual victims of army manoeuvres, like civilian victims of a bombing.

In this same spirit a Derry Court dropped charges against

a soldier from the Queen's Regiment for assaulting a young Derry boy. It had been discovered that he was on bail at the time for raping and disfiguring a 15-year-old girl in England, and was going back to serve a five year sentence. They'd sent him to Derry knowing he'd been charged with rape.

The effects of such continuous fear and brutalisation have not eroded the women's determination for an open and independent inquiry into their sons' deaths. They hope that with the support of CABB and the Prisoners Defence Committee such a campaign can be built in England. They left us with a solemn warning: "Remember that when they come back, it's to your doorstep that they're coming . . . next time!" □

Women and Ireland Group, 50 Upper Tollington Park, London N4.



Kate Walker (left) and Susie Varty (right) at the second "Konvention of Alternative Comics", held at London's AIR Galleries, July 30-31. They are collaborating with other women on a women's comic book, out soon — behind them is "Heroine", a strip by Susie.

At the first "KAK" weekend in Birmingham last year, there was only one woman artist, Susie, and also Hermione, who did the catering! This year there was a workshop on "Women and Comics" — six women to 25 men! Big improvement HUH?

The discussion was fairly good-natured, and centred around the usual male-liberal, guilt questions: "Why don't more women draw comics?"; "Why do you think man-made images are sexist?" Though on the surface sympathetic, the men seemed to feel they could do nothing to change the appallingly misogynist view of women in cartoons and comics, in spite of the fact that most comic artists are men.

All the women present strongly attacked this complacent view and demanded that the men reconsider the

content of their own work, as well as providing more womanspace. The women preferred to discuss such questions as: "Why do men want a woman's comic?" ("We feel hassled by women"); Why are men financing the production of a woman's comic at this time?" ("We know it will sell!").

Results of the "Konvention" which affect women are: 1 a newsletter containing how-to-publish information and lists of printers etc will be available from KAK Birmingham Arts Lab soon; 2 another similar weekend will be held next year; and 3 the WOMENSCOMIC, produced by Susie Varty, financed by B'ham Arts Lab, will be out this autumn. □

Kate Walker
Send your scripts/drawings to
Susie Varty, 9 Edgbaston Rd,
Birmingham.



At the Cambridge Folk Festival held in the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall in July, five women singers staged an impromptu session, performing their own material to an appreciative audience — an unusual event in the male-dominated folk world.

The percentage of women booked to appear at the prestige folk events — Cambridge is the major festival — does not reflect their degree of participation on the folk club scene. At Cambridge, out of a couple of hundred performers, only 12 were women. And of the five in the photograph, only Saffron Summerfield, Frances Gilvray and Joanna Carlin were actually booked to appear.

Saffron Summerfield, herself a feminist, was the instigator of this women's event. Because of clashing timetables, several women who wanted to take part couldn't, but more is promised for next year. "I think a lot of people were taken aback that we would want to do it," said Saffron, hinting at the divisive attitude supposed to prevail amongst folk women. "They thought we would be in competition with each other, but we proved otherwise." □

Val Wilmer

courses etc

●IMAGES OF WOMEN IN 20TH CENTURY FICTION. Evening course (adult education) in Walthamstow this autumn. Feminist discussion of a wide range of authors, including Mansfield, Plath, Orwell, Nabokov, Smedley etc. Contact: Lucy Whitman, 40 Coolhurst Road, London N8. 01-340 6086

●'A WOMAN'S PLACE?' STOCK-TON course starting Tuesday 27th September 7.15pm, 75 Hartington Road (WEA). Phone Sheila (Guisborough 34606) for further details.

WOMEN IN NON-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES. Tutor Annie Whitehead. Holloway Institute, Ringcross School, Georges Road, N7 (near Holloway Road tube). Thursdays 7.30 starting 22 September.

●FEMINIST HISTORY COURSES (Workers Educational Association): 'Feminism and Femininity: Women in 19th Century England'—Highbury Manor School, N5 Thursdays 7.30 (Tutor Barbara Taylor). 'Women in Society: A Historical Perspective'—Morley College SE1 Mondays 6.30 (Barbara Taylor). 'Women's History in the 20th Century'—Working Men's College NW1, Mondays 6.30 (Sally Alexander). All courses run from end of September—March. For more information ring 01-622 4118 (Barbara).

●THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WOMEN—Victoria Library, Tuesdays 7.30. Tutors Barbara Taylor and Sally Alexander. September—March. For more information ring 01-622 4118 (Barbara)

Classified

●MONTHLY WEEKEND COURSES IN BUDDHIST TEACHING/MEDITATION. Next one October 5th/6th. Accommodation available. KAMPO GANGRA KASYU LING CENTRE, MANCHESTER 061-881 5221

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●Worker required for refuge for battered women in Derry City. Application form and job description can be obtained from Eileen Evason, 10 Central Avenue, Portstewart, County Derry. Closing date for applications 20 August 1977.

●National Women's Aid Federation MAY receive a 2-year grant (beginning late Autumn), for researching housing needs of battered women. Project will involve nationwide survey and in-depth studies, to be carried out collectively. Will need 3 research workers having been involved in the Women's Liberation Movement, preferably including Women's Aid. One needs substantial experience in comparable research. Salaries approx £4000, office location to be decided. Informal inquiries to Joan

Neary, NWAFF, 01-586 0104/5192, or write to 51 Chalcot Road, London NW7.

●WANTED: WOMAN to teach me silverwork/jewellery, Yorks area. Pauline Halliday, 129 Hyde Park Road, Leeds 6, Yorks.

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●FEMINIST ART STUDENT seeks accommodation in Bristol urgently from September. Write: Hibou Drusden, 24 Grenville Avenue,

Locking Village, Weston-Super-Mare, Avon.

●Edinburgh: graduate, student nurse, (female, 22) seeks share in friendly house/flat, near to Royal Infirmary from September. Carole Roberts, 111 Rupert Road, Huyton Liverpool.

●Post-grad student seeks friendly accommodation. Warwick-Coventry area. Ring Pam 0602-601593

●CARDIFF. Male feminist 23 forthcoming undergraduate seeks own room in activist household, Lee, Abortion Law Reform Association, 88a Islington High Street, London N1 01-359 5200 office hours.

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Further details and application forms are available from Janet Hunt, National Association of Youth Clubs, PO Box 1, Blackburn House, Bond Gate, Nuneaton CV11 4DB.

Closing date for applications 17 September 1977.

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publications

●WOMAN AND REVOLUTION 15 (summer 77) — 40p from Spartacist Publications BCM Box 4272 London WC1

●DAUGHTERS OF THE GODDESS — it's time we came together. We need you. She needs you. Don't let us down. Lux Madriana, 3 Hill-view Road, Oxford.

●THE COMING AGE. Magazine of the Goddess religion. 35p. 3 Hill-view Road, Oxford.

●WOMEN'S LIBERATION LITERATURE or any books. Send SAE for free booklist to H. Ruto-vitz, 31 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh

●WIRES: the national WOMEN'S LIBERATION INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICE. Send us all your information and queries. Keep in touch with the movement: bi-monthly NEWSLETTER subscription group rates (2 copies) £12/year, £3/quarter (small and poor groups, £8, £2), individual rates (1 copy) £5/year (£3 if poor). Additional copies at £3/year, £1/quarter. Cheques/POs/donations payable to WIRES c/o 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 1. Tel: LDS 35561 ask for WIRES (shared phone).

●SAPPHO Lesbian/feminist magazine 50p inc. post. 20 Dorset Square, London NW1 6QB. Meetings every Tues., 7.30pm Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, W2.

●Old, rare, foreign and secondhand gay books bought and sold. BM-BREAKING OUT, London WC1V 6XX

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●London: girl bassist (serious) wants form join rock band. Box 623

●ARCHWAY WOMEN'S HEALTH GROUP are doing research on 'GENITAL HERPES' (for SR) and would welcome accounts from any women who have had this condition. Please write to: Archway Women's Health Group, 147 Archway Road, London N6—or come to Saturday Open Workshops 2pm first Saturday in every month at above address.

centres

●WOMEN'S RESEARCH AND RESOURCES CENTRE information exchange, library and meeting place for people doing research on women and feminist concerns. Their bi-monthly newsletter lists and reviews latest publications, seminars and meetings held by them and others, and the latest gives details of women's studies courses running in Britain. Sub. annually £5, or what you can afford. WRRRC, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Tel: 01-253 7568

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The low droning of the organ voluntary reverberated through the old stone building, drawing to a close as Mr Wilshire the vicar stepped up to the dais. It was cool inside the church and some of the children wore Sunday sweaters, woolly green V-necks over grey and white checked cotton; they were squeezed along the front two rows, flanked at each end by a member of staff. Behind them, empty lines, and then the village people, not many, now stiffly seated or bent to pray. Sarah looked down from the choir stalls to her schoolmates in the nave, all fidgets and bubble gum. They appeared to enjoy themselves, and she was feeling a bit itchy and hot in the thick, black, tight-fitting cassock, but she had no regrets over the promotion.

Her eyes shifted, focusing on the dark female figure in the organ box, Mrs MacIlvennie in her dusty brown cardigan, the heavy weight of hair pinned up on top of her head. She had her back to Sarah who stood looking at the plump white arm stretching down sideways to the music pile, and then the profiled cheek of the long sad face. "Like a horse," said Angela Peters, house prefect. "Do you think so?" queried Sarah, shyly, fixing mentally on that long-limbed and graceful beast. The mass of hair looked heavier than ever today. Sarah could see it loose. Heavy yes, but wild too and windblown like in those pictures in the Wagner book her mother had given her.

They were praying now, heads and trunks sunk down behind the wooden rails. Two more prayers, two more hymns, that would be about twenty minutes, then the anthem. One of the senior girls would take over on the organ and the congregation would sit, while the choir warbled out the Latin words, responding to the lively flourishes of Mrs MacIlvennie's baton. You could feel quite special up there singing your own song. Choir was certainly a lot better than wasting time blowing bubbles with all those sillies in the nave. If you wanted to join you had to audition. All alone in Mrs MacIlvennie's flat. Rehearsals every Tuesday evening. Soon they'd be more frequent because of the concert. Angela Peters said that if you got a solo part you had to go for special practices on your own nearly every day. "Awful bore," she told Sarah, "I did it last year to get out of Mamselle's embroidery class. But it wasn't worth it. Up in that smelly old flat, hanging around for ages while Mrs Mac finishes the washing up and puts her snotty kid to bed . . . urgh . . ." Mrs Mac washing up, putting Maisie to bed. There was something so shamefully intimate in the scene that Sarah flushed. She wondered if Mrs Mac still wore her hair in a bun at home. And did she always look so unhappy? Even there? She could never think of Mrs Mac without a vague and cloudy concern. Though sometimes it seemed as if she herself would be the one to suffer in the faint anxiety that emanated from the long pale visage.

"The congregation will now stand for hymn number 268, 'All ye mountains and streams, praise ye the Lord'." Shuffling feet, people rising slowly as the organ played the introductory bars. And now there seemed to be a scuffle in the front row. Miss Jones was leaning over, making signs, mouthing reprimand. She had edged along in front of the singers, moving in between Patsy Dawson and one of the boys. It was Russ Halter, ginger haired, freckled, confident and noisy. He must have been having a go at Patsy, she was always pushed into the end seat. Sarah felt that sense of disturbance, that mixture of pity and disgust which so often came over her when she thought of the other girl. Disgust yes, but mingled strangely with that same not entirely selfless concern she felt for Mrs Mac. But Sarah could only rationalise part of the way, for didn't each call out her sympathy? She was not alone in feeling sorry for Patsy, all the girls did. Though she did have that funny voice and you really had to stop yourself laughing when she started to talk. The boys called her Dawson the Witch. Well, they were horrid. Though she did look a bit witchy with her straggly black hair twisted into two stringy

plaits. Sarah wasn't going to call her 'witch' . . . but she was certainly glad Patsy wasn't in the choir. It didn't matter about the others. She never really noticed or bothered about them. But somehow Patsy would have upset the link, for link there was, Sarah was sure, between her and the headmaster's wife. Sometimes in daydreams she would tell her and Mrs Mac would touch her arm, smile. Sarah never knew exactly what came next, and, anyway, there wasn't anything definite, just a blurred sense of the long, horse-like face with the heavy black hair . . . Maisie . . . the washing up . . . and running over ye mountains and streams like the women in the Wagner book. Perhaps Sarah would write her a letter? But no, there was something dull, something much too definite about a letter. What they both felt, she and Mrs Mac, was something finer, something more elevated than could be expressed in mere prose. No, Sarah, who had just discovered John Keats, knew what she would do, she would write her a poem.

Mrs Mac and the Witch

by
Ros Carne

ILLUSTRATED BY SUE HOBBS

Russ Halter was standing on the table at the front of the classroom waving a piece of paper. There was shouting, uproar, people bobbing up and down on the desks, feet stomping on the chalky floor. With ten minutes to go before the third period the room was already crowded out.

"Everybody shut up and I'll read it," shouted Russ, his face creased in merriment.

"Go on then," said plump bouncing Delia who stood closest him. And, appealing to the crowd she added loudly, "Serve her right, dirty lezzie," dwelling with a sensual relish on the long hard sibilants.

Her arm was stretched out over their heads and pointed to the thin pale faced girl by the back wall. The noise, after the lull,

was once again deafening, as Sarah, standing by the wall and following the sign, stared intently at the alien creature with the straggly black hair twisted into two stringy plaits. Stunned and upright in her chair, Patsy's dull eyes were fixed on the boy with the paper. Sarah's stomach seemed to churn. If Patsy was really a witch? And what was a "lezzie"? She didn't dare ask.

Delia had climbed on the table where she stood close by Russ. Waving and shouting together, self-appointed leaders, they tried to silence the mob.

"Lezzie, lezzie, Patsy's a lezzie." Other sounds were fading as the classroom started to join in. At first hesitant they swelled to battle pitch as their confidence increased and just as a slow rhythmic hand-clap rises among an impatient audience so their loudly spasmodic occasional cries grew to a reiterated and relentless chanting... "LES... BI... LES... BI... LES... BI... LES... BI... AN... LESBIAN." Sarah stood silent. She gripped the table's edge hard and her knuckles whitened



as she continued to stare at Patsy. The girl's expression was changing. What had been a blankness, almost a vacancy, was tensing, hardening into an angularity of pain and hatred. In a moment she would act. As if in that expectancy the chanting had begun to fade and with it the wall of defensively massed bodies that had grown up with the resounding phrases. Some flopped onto desks, others moved to nearby chairs. But the twenty pairs of eyes like twenty loaded rifles were still trained on the trembling girl. She drew herself up from the chair, afraid but hostile and as latently fierce as a cornered rat. For a moment there was silence, broken as she backed slowly around the edge of the wall to the door, her heavy lace-ups clattering on the thin raised floor. People slid away as she approached, whether out of pity or fear it was hard to say for the myth of the witch was strong.

Suddenly a voice cried out, "Urgh, she touched me."

The room would have rushed on Patsy and she knew it; lips parted and teeth clenched, she faced them sharply with narrow eyes. Silence again, then sudden sound as she crashed open the classroom door, stumbling wildly out down the steps and off across the grass.

If I incline unto wickedness with mine heart . . ." The psalm, set to music by Mrs Barbara MacIlvennie had an unlikely lilting tune. She stood now, centred on the dais, directing the choir with raised and flickering eyebrows, precise and delicate baton movements. Her faint smile broadened with the successful final cadence and the choir sat down as tubby little Willy Wilshire stood to give the sermon. "Pray without ceasing" came the words from the top of his nose. It might promise badly but it was certainly easy enough to read comics or play jacks behind the high wooden frontage of the choir stalls. Sarah pulled a crumpled magazine from the sleeve of her cassock and started to flip through. *True Romance*. It was one of those Delia Craddock had lent her, for she had laughed at Sarah's animal stories and the poetry she liked to read. And now, flipping through, pretending nonchalance, she was sharply aware of Delia's peach scented presence close to her on the bench.

Throughout the anthem, watching the white mask of the headmaster's wife behind those lively rhythmic gestures, Sarah had felt herself exposed by sound. It was as if each sung word were a proclamation of her most intimate thoughts. And however confused those thoughts, however undefined those emotions, Sarah knew they were something she could never share with Delia. It was as though the incident in the classroom had cracked her delicate eggshell of protection. Sarah may have been "toffee-nose" to her schoolmates, but the charge had never been completely serious, and she had always had a comforting sense that despite or perhaps because of a sustained emotional distance she had been widely if not universally admired. But now everything appeared to be whirled about in reverse. It began to seem crucially important not only that she should be liked by Delia but that she herself should be like her.

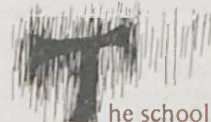
Still musing over *True Romance* she picked up a whisper in her ear.

"Are you coming to the den tonight?"

"Dunno. I'll tell you later. OK?" Delia nodded.

The den was a small store room at the lower end of the attic. It was packed tight with trunks, two of which had been arrayed with rugs to form make-shift couches. (Sarah knew because she had sneaked in alone one day when no one was around.) Delia often went in there with Russ where they "did it . . . as far as number six". Tonight there was to be a party. Russ would bring his radio, some of the other boys might come too, and there'd be cards and coca-cola and potato crisps. "That's all," Delia had added, as if to reassure the other girl. But Sarah wasn't very sure. The den and all it signified had to date played very little

part in her consciousness. Even now there seemed to be little room in her troubled soul for any clear consideration of the connotations of "an evening in the den". Still leafing through *True Romance* she glanced down the nave.



The school seemed unusually quiet. Russ, never still, was fidgeting a bit, winking and making signs towards Delia in the choir, but other faces appeared glum, almost vacuous. And there was one less body in the second row. Patsy Dawson wasn't there. She hadn't been seen for a fortnight. When asked, Matron had simply said, "She's gone home for a while, to be quiet. She's not a well child you know." But if she hadn't been well why couldn't she have stayed in the san? Others did. Matron could give no answer. "I really can't say Sarah. Hadn't you best forget about it. She was never a close friend of yours if I remember rightly." "... Never a close friend . . ." Was Matron being purposely cruel? Sarah blenched slightly. She knew only too well why the girl had left. Patsy was not sick, at least not physically. But she had been in pain, fearful pain, while those who had inflicted the pain kept silent, Sarah too, who felt her responsibility to be as great, possibly greater than any of the others'. She had thought about Patsy a lot in those two weeks, more than she thought about Russ or Delia, almost more than she thought of Mrs Mac who sat ahead of her now in the organ box, a heavy weight of hair piled high on top of her head. Sarah was trying not to look at her and, just as she had tried not to think of Patsy, was trying not to think of her. Then the strong sweet smell of body talc hit her senses . . . Delia, leaning towards her . . .

"Have you decided? I don't know why you're so worried. Nobody's going to do anything to you."

"It's not that." In her mind she could see Russ Halter, his grinning freckled face creased in merriment. And she saw Patsy, tear stained and dragging her awkward feet across the floor. And then the image seemed to become blurred, melting into that of a much older woman with long black hair and a look of strained sadness in her eyes. And with the image came the smell of dishwater, mingled with baby lotion, in the woman's home where she washed up dishes and fed her dribbling, snotty-nosed child. To Sarah it seemed as if the firm ground she had walked on all her life were somehow giving way. She was sinking, slowly, and soon might fall. And there in front of her was an island, and on that island stood Delia, and Russ, shouting, waving, just as they had done in the classroom. But they were smiling too. "Come up and join us," they were saying. "It's easy, we're safe here. Come on, just climb up." The voices became louder, more insistent, until she realised Delia beside her was shaking her arm.

"What's up? Are you asleep? Look. I was going to show you the poem. Did you ever see it?" And she drew a tattered fold of paper from the pocket of her blouse. It seemed familiar, not because Sarah had remembered, but because it seemed she knew quite instinctively what it would be. She took it, slowly. Unfolding that scrap of dog-eared file paper it was as if she had already read the words many times over and all the time she was sinking, sinking. The very shape of the letters was already engraved inside her head, the thirteen lines of well scanned verse above which were printed in a script painstakingly neat the words "To Barbara", and then in brackets "(Mrs MacIlvennie)".

She had sunk deep now. The ground above appeared to be closing over the space of light. But there was still the island, and an arm which seemed to reach into the pit to save her. The arm was Delia's. Sarah spoke.

"Did you say seven o'clock? OK. I'll come. I'm sorry it's taken me so long to decide . . . I suppose I don't want the boys to think I'll just come running whenever they call." And she looked up at Delia who smiled and pulled her ashore. □

She's waiting for you fellas!

The happy family game

FAMILIES in a North town are to be taught Monopoly and other games by probation officers in a bid to get parents and children to talk to each other. Girls are to be taught how to be more feminine to prevent them from possibly becoming "butch boxer girls" or getting pregnant.

"We are bringing in each family once a fortnight just to teach them to play games as a way of getting them to converse," he said.

"For a lot of reasons—from television and the pub, to marital troubles—communication in the home has broken down."

Ten girls aged from 12 to 16 are to undergo the first "fem'nisation" course after being referred by social workers.

"They will be shown how to keep themselves clean and tidy, how to dress and put on make-up, and generally learn some dignity," he said.

"They sound simple things, but in the good family the girls have a lead from their mother. In a lot of families there is just no model like this for them to follow."

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but he will know the exact paper for your requirements. And the price will be right. We think that's one occasion when you'll prefer expertise to the feminine touch.



From a supplement in July edition of *The Print Buyer*

From *The Journal* Sent in by Sue Roberts, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

TOOTH & NAIL

Please keep sending sexist cuttings, photos, quotes and advertisements to 'Tooth and Nail', including all details which may be needed by people wanting to fight back.

WHO TO WORK WITH:

AFFIRM (Alliance For Fair Images and Representation in Media). A group acting against sexism and offensive stereotyping, can be contacted at 35 Colehearn Road, London SW10.

THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS. Send a letter of complaint about sexist material to: The Mother or Father of the NUJ Chapel at the publication concerned, with a copy to the editor, and to the Equality Working Party, NUJ Acorn House, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT SEXIST ADS:

the manufacturers of the product advertised and/or the agency who make up the ad.

WHO TO COMPLAIN TO:

The Independent Broadcasting Authority, for ITV ads and programmes, 70 Brompton Road, London SW9. The Advertising Standards Authority, though notoriously unresponsive to complaints about sexism, 15 Ridgmount Street, London WC1.

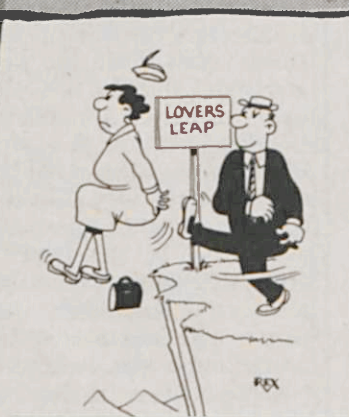
PRODUCTION AND THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

not been an unmixed blessing. The drawbacks of the system are mainly concerned with the loss of 'job satisfaction' which results from the constant repetition of some relatively simple operation.

1. Monotony

A few simple movements which are repeated every few minutes are all that are required of a large number of workers in many factories. Observers often remark that such tasks must be very monotonous. While there is undoubtedly some truth in this charge, it has probably been exaggerated. There are many workers, especially, it is said, large numbers of women and girls, who prefer a daily task which makes limited calls upon the intelligence, demands little initiative, and carries very little responsibility. The almost completely automatic reactions which they develop leave them free to dwell on their domestic and social interests, and to indulge in pleasant conversations with their colleagues.

From *Introductory Economics* by G.F. Stanlake, recommended text book for Ordinary National Certificate in Public Admin. Sent in by Mrs J.L. Sutton, Hadleigh, Ipswich



"I can't make up my mind — which one do you think suits her best?"

"I see he's putting the cat out"

From July issue of *Prima* magazine Sent in by Chris Oram, London SE22

Thorn Consumer Electronics Limited — Colwick Factory

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Would you please truthfully answer the questions detailed below — (Note that an answer of yes against any particular question may not necessarily disqualify your application)

Have you ever suffered or do you suffer from any of the following —

Chest Infections	YES/NO
Fits/Epilepsy	YES/NO
Heart Trouble	YES/NO
Back Trouble	YES/NO
Colour Blindness	YES/NO
Pregnancy (if applicable)	YES/NO
Varicose Veins	YES/NO
Hernia (if applicable)	YES/NO

Comment

Feminist Spirituality



Feminist spirituality is a large sphere, and there is at least as much variation as there

is within, for instance, socialist feminism. What makes it even more confusing is that the issue is similar but not identical to the "political-cultural" clash. Spiritualism is a part of feminist culture, but not all of the women involved in feminist culture are sympathetic to spiritualism.

For convenience's sake, I've chosen in this article to refer to "spiritualists" and "politicos", realising that the two forces are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and with no intention of belittling either. (I should perhaps at the outset identify myself as a politico with spiritualist leanings.)

Most of the politicians see spiritualism as, at best, apolitical and at worst anti-political. "Spiritualism separates you from the mainstream of the struggle," insists Pam Macy, who works at the Cambridge Women's Center, Massachusetts. "It's simply a woman's movement version of religion, and it has the same impact religion does — people turn their energies into themselves and each other, instead of fighting out in the world, where the oppression is..." Peggy Hopper, a tenants' rights activist, sees the spiritualist movement as offering women false and counter-political hopes. "At the conference (in Boston on spirituality) I saw a lot of women whose lives were miserable, looking for someone to take them in hand and tell them what to do. They go to these things instead of being Moonies or Jesus freaks, but it's the same thing."

While some spiritualists implicitly or explicitly reject political action, however, others don't. Gloria Greenfield, one of the Pomegranate women (who form a Dianic coven of witches), says: "We're not talking about an inner-directed, objective diety. All women are the Goddess, so it's self-love, self-worship. We define ourselves as political, as revolutionary..." Like other spiritualists, she talks of "withdrawing energy from patriarchy", but this doesn't preclude actively fighting against it. "We must be realistic and realise we're warriors — we have to take responsibility to live and protect our bodies. So if you know, for instance, that you're about to get physically attacked, you can use the energy you've reclaimed to attack them if you have to. One aspect of the goddess Artemis — strength. Their definition of 'political' is very narrow."

Another accusation aimed at spiritualism is that by its very nature it's elitist, middle class, hierarchical. Again, that varies. The Pomegranate women act collectively and their definition of being a witch is to simply declare oneself so. Yet a pamphlet called "A Guidebook for the New Dianic Groves" put out by the Mother Grove explicitly condones a hierarchical structure, and offers women

In the USA "Feminist Spirituality" is a term for a growing movement within feminist culture. "Women are exploring psychic and non-material phenomena: re-interpreting astrology; creating and celebrating feminist ritual around birth, death and menstruation; reading the Tarot; studying pre-patriarchal forms of religion; re-viving and exploring esoteric goddess centred belief systems; learning psychic and homeopathic healing; practicing meditation and yoga; revolutionising our food and natural resource consumption out of the consciousness of our connectedness to the rest of the biosphere." (*Women's Survival Sourcebook*)

In comparison, British women are not nearly so involved with goddess worship and witchcraft, but certain aspects of the spirituality movement have been taken up; the emphasis on our child-bearing capacity; the rediscovery of women's traditional skills like herbal cures; and the spiritualists concentration on self development, breaking down divisions between mind and body, self and others, humans and nature. "One of the important things about the 'spiritual' part of the movement is that it moves you to think of yourself as a whole person. Having a sense of oneself as a physical, sensual being and developing self-responsibility seems to be crucial to avoid burning out... we are more than just intellectual beings." (*Off Our Backs*)

In Britain this year two spiritualist magazines appeared, *The Coming Age*: magazine of the Goddess religion and *The Universal Woman*: The Newsletter of the Young Women's Spiritual Association. They write, "Through the Women's Liberation Movement we have learned that our liberation will not come by struggling to match male standards but rather by realizing our own inner strength and divine qualities... Our movement must come from the strength of the soul. When the divinity and beauty within ourselves is brought out, then only can we fight an effective battle against the prevailing injustices of society towards women." The Newsletter contains articles on Mother Teresa who runs a hospital in Calcutta, Leboyer birth methods, and Ananda Marga — an organisation which teaches a synthesis of traditional Tantric and Yoga practices "with a social aspect".

Many feminists have reacted strongly against the spirituality movement. A schism has developed in the USA: "To 'political' women, 'spiritual' means institutions and philosophies which have immobilised practical changes and have channelled women's energies into serving others to their own detriment. To 'spiritual' women, 'political' means institutions and philosophies which deny the unity of people and have channelled women's creativity into destroying and fighting each other." (*Country Women*)

Karen Lindsey examines the controversy in the context of the American women's liberation movement.



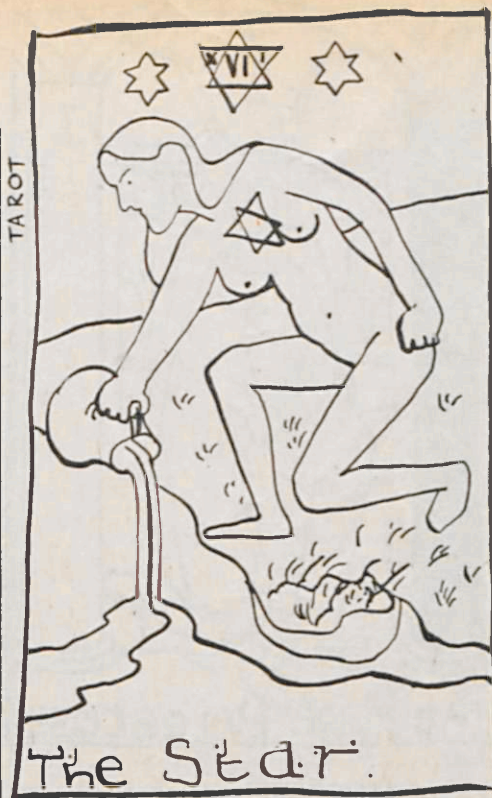
an ominous reward for following witchcraft: "Though the word witch has a most ancient heritage, there is an older title, and that is what you *will* be — A Worshipper of the Goddess..." Women have always been permitted, and in fact forced, to be worshippers, and the transfer of worship from a male to a female deity seems a fairly minor transition at best.

Peggy Hopper, who has worked with tenant organising groups, talks of the Haitian women she has met, with their heritage of voodoo rituals. "Why don't these women go there and learn from them?" she asks. "Or to the Puerto Rican women who still use herbal cures? They talk about herbal healing, spiritual ritual, yet here are women who are doing these things today and have been for centuries." She feels that there is an unconscious racism behind the lack of interest in third world herbal and spiritual knowledge, and that the feminist spiritualists are fundamentally committed to middle class privilege.

Gloria Greenfield indignantly disagrees. "My mother was a janitor and my father used to beat the shit out of her all the time. Her spirit was gone. She'd come home and turn her pay cheque over to that slob and she had no power — her spirit was completely destroyed. She needed to realise that she was worthy of respect — and until she realised that she couldn't rebel against him. Coming from that background I resent middle class women saying that lower class women are too bland or whatever to concern themselves with their own moving forces, and that other people have to show them how to move. I think there's a lot of class chauvinism coming from people who always scream classism. It's bizarre — I come from a lower class situation and everyone assumes I'm middle class because I'm into spiritualism."



Another attack levelled by politicians is that spiritualism emphasises "Mother Right" — the natural superiority of women which will assert itself through the establishment of gynocracy — the rule of women. This does seem to be a common thread through much feminist spiritualist theory. In the Pomegranate women it's relatively benign, and even allows for heterosexuality: "Men are the *creation*, not the creators — the sons, not the mothers," says Pat McLoon of Pomegranate. "They are not a life force; they're removed. If they were in their proper place we'd exist in harmony. We don't expect them to crawl on their bellies, they just have to remember they're creations." "If a woman can use her energy to maintain a relationship, personal or political, with a



man who accepts his role as 'son', it's OK," says Gloria Greenfield. "I'm very opposed to women who say to other women, 'you have to give up your male child' or whatever... There just isn't a correct line." Yet in a letter to *Sister Courage* on the desirability of exploring parthenogenesis (reproduction without fertilisation), Greenfield describes men as "mutants" and goes on to say that male children result from a mother who has suffered from "deficient or abnormal food, high temperatures, deficient light, moisture and the like", during pregnancy, and suggests altering these factors to create a primarily or even solely female world. Other spirituality feminists are even more involved in the mother-right theory of female superiority.

Though there are also separatists among the politicians, many of them, like Pam Macy, are horrified by the mother-right vision. "I'm not interested in creating a world where women have power over men; I don't see perpetuating inequality that way."

Assuming the politicians are right, why bother attacking spiritualism? Why not simply ignore it and stick with attacking powerful male institutions? Both Pam and Peggy Hopper see feminist spirituality as more than irrelevant — they see it as a dangerous negative force in the movement. "On a certain level it is political," says Pam. "It co-opts and drains energy." Peggy worries that the spiritualist movement will grow out of proportion in a time when the country at large is more and more attracted to escapism — Jesus freaks, Moonies."

"At best it's discouraging for political people — they got that huge spirituality conference together in April, when in March no one could get energy together for a march on International Women's Day. It's dangerous if that becomes the most visible part of what you think is a

woman's movement..."

Not all of the women who are sceptical about the spirituality movement doubt the validity of psychic power itself. Marge Piercy, who frequently reads the Tarot cards and has written a brilliant sequence of political poems based on one of her readings, says: "It would be impossible for me to doubt that there are many irrational powers of the mind... My mother was an extremely gifted palm reader, and would experience things happening to people in her family when there was no contact at all. On the other hand, it seems no more significant to women's freedom than being double-jointed. My mother would have been far better off if she wouldn't have had to first work as a chambermaid and then be financially dependent on her husband. I believe that many of the irrational gifts of the mind are important in a good society — in my novel *Woman On The Edge Of Time*, I try to portray how we'll use those skills in a good world. But I get scared when I hear women thinking of witchcraft or spirituality as a tool or weapon against governmental power. The witches were wiped out. It's a tool of oppressed people — and it's a poor tool compared to even an automatic rifle. We must have respect for these gifts without believing they can do more than they can do."



At its most extreme, feminist spiritualism can be pretty scary. In *Woman-spirit*, Sally Gearhart insists that "power is not on Capitol Hill or Wall Street or in any military might," but instead is in us if we choose it. This is fine as far as it goes: certainly women need to fight the sense of worthlessness and self-concept that patriarchy has bred into us. But reading Gearhart, Barbara Starret (author of *I Dream In Female*) and some of the other feminist spiritualists, I get the terrifying feeling that they really believe we can *will* patriarchy out of existence. Starret's image of man as a vampire, draining women's energy, is fine poetry but dubious politics: in traditional mythology, the power of a vampire could be contained simply through religious faith, manifested through the use of a crucifix. Unfortunately the power is with the military and Wall Street and Capitol Hill, and if our "withdrawal of energy" harms the men in control, they'll find it easy enough to break into our apartments or our covens and kill us — and no energy circle or invocation to the goddess will stop them. Naomi Wiestein and Heather Booth, in an article in *Sisters*, compare feminist spirituality to the Indians' Ghost Dance, which they believed would destroy the

white man, and which led to their lack of defence against the massacre at Wounded Knee. It's a bit chilling to read Jerianne Hilderly's article in *Womanspirit* calling for women to create rituals like the Ghost Dance.

Perhaps the crucial flaw in the hard-core spiritualists' reasoning is that spiritual energy does not equal power in and of itself; it is *potential* power whose realisation requires concrete action. As an end in itself, energy isn't a whole lot more useful than lethargy.

The other frightening aspect of spiritualism is the emphasis on "gynocracy" — it has unpleasant echoes of the Master Race theory. It may be that the only difference between mutating males out of existence and exterminating Jews is that the Nazis had the apparatus to enforce their vision and the feminist spiritualists don't. Female supremacy as a game can be healing: when you're constantly being physically and emotionally battered by men (as we all are in a hundred ways every day) it can be a useful tool of self-reclamation to sit around with other women and yell about those lousy little mutated Y chromosomes who are running our lives. To take it any more seriously than this, however, is at best silly, and at worst fascistic.

And it might be useful to remember that Christianity, for all its limitations, began as a genuinely revolutionary movement and ended up as one of the most efficiently oppressive institutions patriarchy has ever controlled. I doubt that it was Y chromosomes that caused it.



Yet the total dismissal of spirituality has dangers of its own. On a purely practical level, both the Russian government and several large American universities, strong patriarchal institutions, are experimenting in such psychic phenomena as ESP, telekinesis, and Kirlian photography. There is good reason to believe that we have latent psychic powers, atrophied by millennia of disuse, and that these institutions are finding ways to revive those powers. If we ignore what patriarchy is learning, we may well be helping them to assume full control over a force that can make mind-altering drugs and psycho-surgery look primitive. Whatever its political limitations, the Russian government isn't stupid and would hardly be wasting its money and its scientists on pure superstition. Ironically, to ignore what they're doing might put us in the position of the Indian Ghost Dancers, succumbing to the



superstition of "pure" rationality. (Sceptics should read Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder's *Psychic Discoveries Behind The Iron Curtain*.)

And there can be great pleasure and great renewal in spiritual-psychic activities. Personally I have found the Tarot (cards for divination and psychic exploration) a useful source both for reaching my own unconscious and for reclaiming some of my psychic abilities. (Other women, and men for that matter, have had similar experiences with the *I Ching*, astrology, numerology and other "occult" studies.)

As Marge Piercy says: "I think spirituality has a constructive use in one's own life. I use the Tarot often to meditate and try to understand my own life. I never attempt to get straight political feedback from it — I don't think those skills have a lot to do with changing the world the way we want to change it — they can enrich our personal lives but otherwise leave us right where we were..."

While working on this article, I did a Tarot reading, asking about the feminist spirituality movement. The cards warned of poor judgement, of the dangers of "leading others to destruction in the pursuit of idle fantasies", of refusal to listen to wisdom. The best to be hoped for was "peace and order established through strength and exercise of arms". The final outcome if these were ignored was oppression. At the same time there was a call for "equilibrium, interplay of opposing forces", which suggested to me that politics and spirituality must somehow be balanced in the movement.

Maybe the cards were saying that the goddess helps those who help themselves. □



This letter was printed on the same page as Karen Lindsey's article in *State and Mind*.

I've been teaching women's spirituality and psychic skills for about three and a half years now. I've moved from being a Dianic priestess, to a gynarchical witch, to a Reverend (in a way I'm still all three). Some of the workshops I've given were: Discovering your Orgasmic knowing, Centering, Developing your Intuition, Self-Affirmation, Guided Fantasy, Dreams, and Changing Your Past and Accepting Your Present. I teach/guide these in a way that is relevant to women and what I call a woman-centered way.

I would like to write an article about the women's spiritual movement or what it's like to be a feminist in the spiritual movement. Instead I'll settle for sharing some brief insights about the spiritual movement that were useful to me and may be useful to you to keep in mind while reading this issue of *State and Mind*.

A lot of what is called the spiritual movement is really the *male* spiritual movement, yet we call it *the* spiritual movement. (Just as studies on male alcoholics are called "studies on alcoholism" and studies on female alcoholics are called "studies on female alcoholics," etc.)

Being a woman and doing woman's spirituality is different than being a man and doing men's spirituality. Our lessons are different. In Mexico when I was looking at a newsletter put out by Ram Dass's followers (Baba Ram Dass, formerly a Harvard lecturer, became involved in Eastern religion and wrote *Be Here Now*) a woman said to me, "It isn't that his teachings are no good or unconscious or anti-political. It is that his teachings are not for women. In fact his work is perfect for most men." I then reread the paper. Ram Dass talked about surrendering your ego, and being devoted to god. As a woman I learned to surrender years ago, a problem we as women often have is standing on our own power and knowing we're important: "Walking down the street I feel me loving me, walking down the street I feel me." (Part of a song/chant by Lisa Buerger)

When talking to my friend Marshall the other day he said, "Ahshe, I'm learning to cry, today I let myself cry when I felt hurt." I said, "Marshall, you know if I wanted I could write an article and people would be interested in what I have to say." He thinks: "An article — I used to be a professor and I've written lots of articles. It's time for me to allow myself to feel and know I'm valid without producing." I think: "I've done a lot of crying and it's time for me to do something with my emotions, thoughts, and ideas." He's going where I came from and I'm going where he came from. Women are learning that they can affect the world (the patriarchy). Men are learning that they can trust their inner voices,

that they can surrender to the god in them.

I think both male and female goals in consciousness and spirituality are similar yet our means and paths are as different as our bodies, as our socialization, as the way we're both treated and feel walking down the street.

Ahshe Greene



State and Mind, Box 89, West Summer-
ville, Massachusetts 02144, USA.

November-December 1976 issue on
spirituality.

The New Women's Survival Sourcebook,
ed. Kirsten Grimstad and Susan Rennie,
Alfred A. Knopf, New York. A detailed
section on spirituality.

Country Women, PO Box 51, Albion,
California 94510. April 1975 spirituality
issue.

Womanspirit, available from A Woman's
Place, 42 Earlham St, London WC1. A
quarterly which deals only with
spirituality.

Off Our Backs, 1724 20th Street NW,
Washington, DC 20009, available from
A Woman's Place. December 1976 issue
has report on US spirituality conference.

The Universal Woman, Newsletter of the
YWSA, from Nandita, Women's Centre,
1 Cazenove Rd, London N16 (5p).

The Coming Age, 3 Hill View Rd, Oxford.

The Ancient Religion of the Great
Goddess, by Monica Sjoo. Pamphlet
available from Compendium, 240
Camden High St, London NW1.



reviews

BOOKS

THE TAMARISK

TREE

My Quest For Liberty And Love

by Dora Russell

(Virago £1.95)

Dora Russell's autobiography *The Tamarisk Tree* tells us about the feminist struggles of the twenties and thirties—the side stressed by Sheila Rowbotham's article and Drusilla Modjeska's interview in *SR* 54 (January 1977). But her life itself tells us a lot about feminism, and how slowly things change for academic women.

Dora abandoned her apparently unstoppable academic career to marry Russell—in fact, she first attracted his attention by saying that what she most desired was to marry and have children, though she was not interested in conventional marriage.

This sounds odd in an active feminist; but we recognize the division of mind produced in intellectual women: desire to excel by one's talents pulls one way, desire to be a 'normal, fulfilled' woman pulls the other, and often the woman resigns from her field for personal reasons, and compensates by becoming an ardent theoretical feminist; refusing to compete for jobs, she urges that women be given more jobs. In Dora's case we see this with particular clarity and pain.

There is a rather pathetic passage where she describes how, when doing research in Paris, she was invited for lunch by a professor who 'taught me how pleasant it was to eat oysters accompanied by Vouvray. He was, it appeared, researching in my own subject. I realized that my efforts might well be amateurish in comparison; this was one more argument for giving them up . . . The Professor was in fact Paul Hazard, whose superb book on *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century* . . . has become for me a bedside bible.' Most women in academic life recognize this feeling: the Professor, so superior in the ways of the world and how to eat oysters, manages to make one feel an amateur in the intellectual game too. Hazard was probably not trying to put Dora off; but he did, and she escaped profession-

alism, as so many women do who get half-way up the academic ladder, at the usual cost: she ended up reading his book instead of writing hers.

It is easy to say that the world did not need yet another specialized academic book, and that she did better to devote her efforts to feminist agitation. And yet I feel sad that she sinned against her talents in this way. In the end it did her no good with Russell, who whatever his faults never hesitated to follow the argument where it led, even when it led into years of boredom or distaste. And like so many women who give up a serious career, she was left with an excess of energy which frittered itself away until it found satisfaction in that most traditional of caring occupations—looking after a schoolful of children. In 1921 she said jokingly, 'I might even have aspired—as I said—to be Mistress of Girton myself, though I knew this to be impossible.' What a difference someone like Dora would have made to the bleak and conformist atmosphere of the Oxbridge women's colleges in the inter-war years. Instead she tried to become an actress, and became a public speaker. But she came over as a Serious Woman, whereas Russell's talent for turning ideas into entertainment could get anything past an audience; ironically, she was worsted by Russell in the one activity which she took up not to compete with him.

Her friend C.K. Odgen, a Cambridge don, always urged her to use her intellectual talents and not dissipate herself. She quotes a defensive letter to him: 'If I have two babies and three books and one garden and two houses in order by my thirtieth birthday, I shall feel I have done well.' But she adds, honestly and sadly, 'Odgen was perfectly right: all my life I have tried to do too many different things . . . For a woman marriage presents not only practical problems, but she finds herself pulled all ways, and tends by tradition and impulse to put the needs of others before her own. What is more, opening her eyes on the world, she feels intensely responsible for setting it to rights.'

But one thing shines strongly through the story of frittered opportunities: how much more emotionally honest and courageous she was than Russell. As the social climate changed and Russell's open marriage and

reviews

permissive school began to make him feel personally uncomfortable and socially isolated, he changed protective colouring; not hypocritically, one feels, but out of a deep panic. He left Dora for a young and totally conventional wife, and became engrossed in property rights and the purity of his family line. The part of his *Autobiography* which covers his marriage to Dora was written at this time, and reflects his disillusionment. Dora was incapable of thus cutting her emotional losses, and from her account and the recent Russell biography by Ronald Clark we find that in his anxiety to shed his embarrassing left-wing ideas Russell rewrote the past, greatly understating his own commitment to their school and what it stood for, filtering complex parts of their story into man-of-the-world anecdotes.

The only part of Dora's book where she turns on Russell are the pages where she describes reading his claim that their marriage foundered because it put too great a strain on his capacity 'for forgiveness and what may be called Christian love.' In a wonderful passage Dora recalls how he had once fought for free and honest relationships with no 'forgiveness' for 'infidelities'. Their marriage was an attempt to live outside 'these proprietary concepts and patriarchal sanctions.' When it failed, Russell retreated and tried to forget that he had ever not been respectable. But Dora stuck by her beliefs through long years of hardship, difficulty, rejection by her daughter, who was ashamed of her mother's unfashionable unconventionality and entranced by her father's beautiful young wife.

How inspiring besides Russell's cowardly and self-serving change. And yet, ironically, we find out about these years only from her daughter's book, where we glimpse Dora bravely coping with the school, weeping at night, unable to tell her daughter why, cooking for her grandchildren in a 'shabby chaos of vibrant life.' Having sacrificed the gifts that might have led her to excel in a male world, Dora shows no faith that people will be interested in, or respect, her traditional female virtues. She falls silent about the years where they come to the fore, and her life is presented as borrowing importance from a man whom she recognizes as her moral inferior. However, she is probably right in thinking that the public feels more

interest in Russell's sex life than in her own brave thankless struggle to keep the light burning.

Julia Annas

TORCH SONG

by Annie Roiphe

(Secker and Warburg

£3.90)

The heroine of *Torch Song* is a plump, suffering, Jewish New Yorker. She's self-deprecating, ironic and always up front about her bodily functions. She travels in Europe with a blonde horror of a man, supporting his sexual problems, and dealing with memories of Nazi atrocities in Germany. Sounds familiar?

Torch Song does have enormous overlaps with Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*. But what's to be done? The Women's Liberation Movement encourages women to write from their own experiences, consciousness raising has shown how much we share, echoes are unavoidable. So does *Torch Song* contribute anything new to our understanding of female experience?

As in *Fear of Flying* Anne Roiphe uses a flash back format permitting the heroine to be self mocking and insightful after the event, but it's almost as if Anne Roiphe had decided to correct the image of Erica Jong's Isadora. Isadora tours Europe with a Laingian shrink, Marjorie travels with a "suitable case for treatment". Isadora has lots of Arayan fair hair, while even Marjorie's good friends call her "brillo-head". Isadora's mum is a frustrated artist, Marjorie's mum is just frustrated. Isadora is a published poet, and Marjorie? "If love could relieve his suffering and release the well spring of his talent I would provide it. It was all I wanted for myself, to be the greenhouse in which the orchid, the cross-bred, prize winning orchid could grow to full magnificence."

That's where Anne Roiphe's book diverges interestingly from Erica Jong's. Both attempt to come to terms with a woman's hopeless addiction for a sadistic, unworthy, self-centred male; Erica Jong attributes romantic addiction to narcissism and driving sexual attraction, Anne Roiphe treats it in terms of both the Artist's Wife



"Bride" by Catherine Elwes. Relief in perspex case using tissues, rubber, make-up, etc.

FLASHBACK

Our publication schedule means that by the time you read a review of an exhibition, it's usually long over. So we're starting *Flash Back* – illustrations and captions which will act as a record of women's art events.

NEW WAYS OF SEEING AND BEING SEEN

Women's Art Alliance June 24–July 15

Our society and the media have made a woman's appearance not so much a form of self expression, but of oppression. Every woman is aware of her physical "shortcomings", but these exist within a very restricted idea of beauty. For instance, legs must be long, bodies must be thin – short legs and too much fat are, by definition ugly, imperfect and to be hidden. However close a woman finds herself to the current ideal of female beauty, there will still be parts of herself she hates. "On Show" is a developing investigation of female conditioning.

Catherine Elwes and Annie Wright are both members of the Women Artists Collective.



FILMS

UNION MAIDS

'Union Maids' is a documentary about three women, Kathrine Hyndeman, Stella Nowicki and Sylvia Woods, who were part of the upsurge of trade unionism in the United States in the 1930's. It was a militant unionism which recruited workers on an industrial rather than craft basis. It was based on the unskilled and semi-skilled and thus had a particular relevance for women, blacks and immigrants. There were also close links with the unemployed organisations and tenants groups.

Violence from thugs paid to break up picket lines and from the police was common. The song which gives the film its title tells how the "Union Maid . . . never was afraid/of goons and ginks and company finks/ and Deputy Sheriffs who made the raid." In response, workers used direct action, sit down strikes, in which they occupied work places.

The three women in the film left home in the late 1920's to live in Chicago. The new life they found in the big city hurtled them into these conflicts. Katherine Hyndeman became active in the unemployed movement and in fighting eviction with tenants. Stella Nowicki worked in the Chicago stockyards. A seventeen year old, fresh from a farm, she was horrified by the yards and by the lack of safety provision. A woman lost her finger in one of the machines.

" . . . that night a bunch of us got together and we wrote out a leaflet on it and came out with certain demands. We asked the women not to operate those machines until the company assured us that there would be safety guards. The whole place heard about it. Here are these bunch of women actually organised and stuck together and went right up to the foreman and swore in Polish or whatever. . . 'We no work' . . . 'Fix the machines' . . . 'Safety guards!' "

Sylvia Wood's father was involved in the black movement. He used to take her to rallies organised by followers of Marcus Garvey, where a band would play: "it would be such a prideful thing to walk into this music." He used to tell her to listen to a young woman speaker, "Because I want you to be like her."

In a way she did become like her. One day in the Chicago laundry where she worked there was a dispute with the

syndrome and the case of the Unobtainable Object.

Marjorie sees a purpose for herself as the moist peat which will germinate Jim Morrison's genius. There's self denial in the role but also a vicarious kick. The theme is worked through and with true consistency we finally see Marjorie affirming her husband's fishing just as she had once nurtured Jim's talent as a writer.

But the other reason for her addiction — her obsession with Jim — is far less clearly depicted. Jim is the original unobtainable object. He won't have a sexual relationship with her; he hates penetrating and can only reach orgasm through masturbation accompanied by real or fantasised humiliation of women — he has incredibly "nasty habits". But nevertheless Marjorie's hooked; she can live forever in the world of the meaningful kiss and the loving hug, she can dream of the great day when Jim will be cured, will want her, will take her in his arms and . . . In other words *Torch Song* presents the final, perfected True Romance format. And Jim, pale, sensitive, thin and safely limp is the stuff of early adolescent fantasies.

Twice in the book Marjorie makes love conventionally with a man, both times she experiences him as alien — a frighteningly foreign body. She remains detached from the act which strikes her as ludicrous or terrifying: "Suddenly he spread my legs and the smooth top of his penis pushed at me. For a moment I felt like a wild cat. I could rip him apart for attacking me."

But Anne Roiphe never explores her heroine's ambivalence towards penetration and though she paints a picture of a romance junkie, she never really explains the addiction. There are hints, clues in Marjorie's cultural environment, her girlhood and family background (with a good mother/ daughter portrait).

Like *Fear of Flying* and other books of that ilk, *Torch Song* relies on readers identifying with the situation in order to grasp the novel, but Marjorie's story is just too melodramatic and excessive to incite the mass identification that Isadora provoked.

Miriam Moss



Photo from "the mask sequence" by Annie Wright

Our joint work in this exhibition at the Women's Arts Alliance begins to explore how it feels to be a woman — on show and constantly aware of it.

However, much of the work exhibited is individual — Annie working from an autobiographical basis, and Catherine exploring female myths. Eventually finding ourselves at a common point of feminist awareness, we decided that some collaboration was essential.



Collaboration piece



"We do need films which show us how women have organised successfully"

boss, "... We shut down the mangles... And the police came and if it had been like today I suppose somebody would have been killed because we fought the police. I mean we threw glasses at them and we threw bottles and they were trying to throw us out bodily and we were kicking and scraping. They finally got us out of the plant and then we didn't know what to do."

All three discuss the particular problems of women workers; how they were affected by meetings held at work, of the need for nurseries. Stella Nowicki says, "These poor women would have to work all day and then they would have to come home and take care of the house."

The men did not question this double work load, and for the union, women's oppression as a sex seems to have been ignored. So though women were unionised, especially in the large industries where their power as workers could not be overlooked, the unions themselves remained 'a man's job'. The women who were active in the union were in a minority. They tended to be unmarried or to be childless. They could be seen as exceptions. Kate Hyndeman was told off by an official when she worked briefly for the union because she had lunch with the typists. He thought it was 'unbecoming'. The typists were beneath the workers' organisers.

The women tell their stories in a very simple and direct way

which makes you feel close and connected to them. Their lives make you want to cry and make you feel your own strength at the same time. The film combines their accounts with contemporary footage of the 1930's; breadlines, police attacking strikers, and thousands of demonstrators marching down Chicago's State Street. This helps you to realise that their personal experience carries a wider history.

I think it is in dealing with the history of the labour movement of the 'thirties that the film is less successful. The basic picture of the militancy and the women's problems is there, but the awkward details are glanced over. Any history on film of working class women organising is still very new. Nonetheless we need to find ways of exploring the growth of particular forms of political consciousness more deeply. All three women were in the Communist Party in the 1930's and this was important in their union activity but is not stated explicitly in the film. We do need films which show us how women have organised successfully. The women who were part of this strike wave have been neglected by most of the written histories. But we also need to know how movements from below disintegrate. The industrial unions of the 1930's became corrupt and bureaucratic after World War II. It is important for us to consider more precisely the relationship be-

tween this process and women's minority position within the union machine. Similarly what were the consequences for these women in the absence of an explicit feminist consciousness on the left which could insist on women's situation in the family being central to the organisation of women in the workplace? I think we need films in which there are arguments and openings, saggings in the middle and asides. Otherwise a militant past appears stranded from the present and there is not a complex dialectic with what is remembered.

Sheila Rowbotham

'*Union Maids*' is available from Contemporary Films, 55 Greek Street, W1. Tel: 01-437 9392 or 01-734 4901. (16 mm. Black and white. 45 minutes. £12 to hire)

'*Union Maids*' is produced by New Day Films and made jointly by Miles Mogulescu who has worked with video and television, and Julia Reichert and James Klein who worked on 'Growing Up Female', 'Methadone: An American Way of Dealing', and 'Men's Lives'.

There are more detailed interviews with the women in 'Union Maids' in Rank and File, Personal Histories by Working Class Organisers, ed. Alice and Staughton Lynd. Available from Beacon Press, 25 Beacon St, Boston, Mass. 02108, U.S.A. (\$3.95 plus postage.)

THREE WOMEN

Directed by

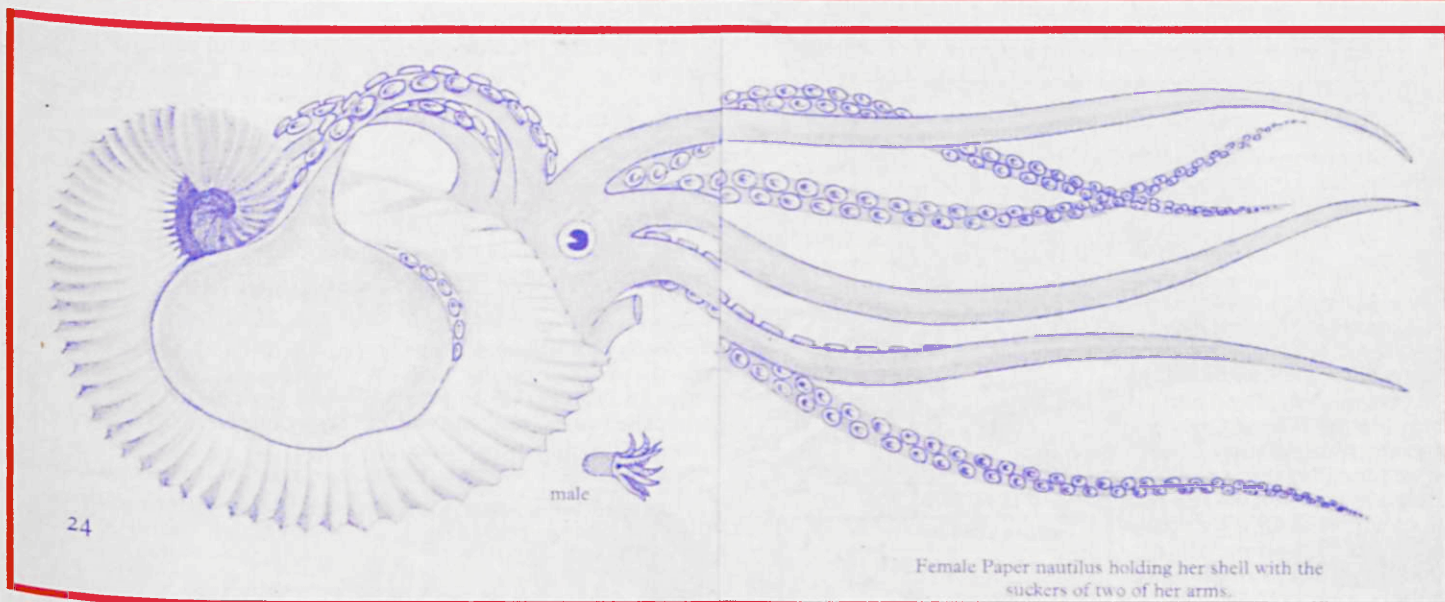
Robert Altman

Altman claims this film is basically a record of a dream of his. He has attempted to recapture the feeling of dreaming by using ridiculous settings (geriatric health baths, artificial ghost town, purple and yellow apartment block), by the liberal use of Symbols That Must Be Very Significant, and by breaks in the thread of the story (people turning into other people). On paper it sounds like a fair description of dreaming, but it fails in practice because it is too vivid, too emotionally real — it is more feverish than dreamlike.

Whatever Altman may say, it is actually about the awfulness, the desperation, the terror of three women's rather ordinary lives. I presume that this is because the actresses collaborated with Altman in writing their parts. Whatever else is going on, their expressions and words come through sharply and painfully. The women are not strictly likeable, but I became utterly involved with them, flinched with them, gasped with them, fumed with them.

The central character, Milly (Shelley Duvall), tries to live a life out of *Vogue* and *Good Housekeeping*, desperately wanting to be cool and popular, but failing and not understanding why. Her expressions of hurt as she is ridiculed and ignored were for me the best thing in the film — pain held back behind a social half-smile, coming out as rage at her flatmate, the only person who really notices her. She cannot be angry with those actually causing her pain. She is foolish and destructive, but no more so than the people who reassure themselves by despising her. She is absolutely without power, yet she struggles to maintain her dignity; she creates an absurd order in her life, because she has no other way to take control of her own life.

Her flatmate Pinky (Sissy Spacek) is more sinister; she becomes parasitic on Milly in trying to give order to her life. We see her in the process of taking on a social framework — a role. Pinky at first sees Milly as a perfect person, as a role model rather than as a friend, while Milly takes her compliments and lets her down. But the two women come to realise that they only have each other. Having been



"it was many years before the male Argonaut was discovered"

Illustration by Joyce Bee from *Octopus, Cuttlefish and Squid* by Gwynne Vevers (Bodley Head £2.25)



Pinky (left) and Milly (right), two of the *Three Women*

FILM FROM THE CLYDE

by Cinema Action

A documentation of the work-in at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971 against the proposed Tory 'butchering' of four of the yards. Although it deals mainly with a men's industrial struggle, it also has a brief but important sequence about the women's work-in at the Fakenham shoe factory in 1975*, thereby making important links in the way the UCS work-in inspired struggles all over the country.

Generally, the film's emphasis on the fight against unemployment in an already decaying urban area would have been greatly strengthened by an investigation of what unemployment around Clydeside means for women in the home. Also, it would have been nice to have seen more of the women working in the admin. and the canteens as their actual position in the work-in wasn't made clear. But despite this it's worth seeing.

It will be showing at the Edinburgh Film Festival, August 23-September 2. Then touring Scotland, Stirling, Dundee, Glasgow in September, and the rest of the UK after that. Inexpensive to hire, from Cinema Action, 35a Winchester Road, London NW3 (01-585 2762).

BOOKS for children

NEW PAPERBACKS

HALLO AURORA!

by Anne-Cath Vestly

(Puffin 50p)

for 6 yr olds and upwards is a warm, funny book about Aurora and her baby brother Socrates who are looked after by Dad while Mum goes out to work. The family are shown adjusting to living in a high rise block while the neighbours have to adjust to their 'different' attitude to sex roles.

THE RUNAWAY SETTLERS

by Elsie Locke

(Puffin 60p)

for readers of 10 and upwards is the true story and a moving one, of an Australian woman Mrs Small and her children in mid 19th century, who are forced to flee to New Zealand to escape from her brutal husband. Driven to change her name to ensure that he will never find her, 'Mrs Phipps' with determination and courage forges a new life for herself and her 6 children. The detail of 19th century domestic and agricultural work is reminiscent of the American pioneer stories of Laura Ingalls Wilder (*The Little House in the Big Wood* etc); the account of the family's interdependence with a Maori village nearby sympathetically drawn.

rejected by other tight, joyless groups they come to reject everyone else, even to the point of somehow killing off the man they shared with each other and with the third woman, Willy. The three women end up as a family, with all that implies; not exactly a happy ending, but some kind of resolution.

Willy says very little in the film, just appears stark and brooding. She paints prophetic pictures of men-creatures strutting, and groups of three women-creatures in various configurations. Presumably understanding more than the others what is happening to them, she at least ends up looking calm and free.

The film is not feminist in the sense of being pro-woman, and though they have given up competing for men, the

women do not create a lesbian heaven. But I did believe that they were real, flawed women doing the most they could outside a feminist consciousness. They were not beautiful or kind; they were determined to survive. I certainly recognised their emotions and many of their actions, their social devices.

There are many other 'bits' to this film. It does not work as a whole — one has to take from it what one wants, and I have done so. There are all sorts of details that might Mean Something, that you could amuse yourself with on rainy evenings, but I would rather give credit to the three actresses, who were superb, than worry about what was going on in the director's head.

Ruth Wallsgrove

reviews

THE FRIENDS

by Rosa Guy
(Puffin 60p)

Also for older readers is about Phyllissia, a West Indian newly arrived in New York to join her parents. She is up against the class aspirations that accompany immigration as much as the violence of her strife-torn Harlem school and this is the back-drop to her friendship with Edith, a dynamic New Yorker — witty, loyal and brave in the face of poverty and the responsibility of her abandoned brother and sisters. How Phyllissia learns to accept the realities of New York and her family's position in it is the theme of this demanding book.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop

MAISIE, MOLLY AND KIM

Three promising little girls appear in the latest crop of hardback children's picture books. First of all, Kim in

WON'T SOMEBODY PLAY WITH ME?

by Steven Kellogg
(Warne £2.95)

wants to play while waiting for her birthday presents "when your daddy comes home from work". Kim is determined and energetic, but the strong part of this book is in the powerful imaginings that Kim has of herself and her mates in exciting and very non-passive activities. The story finishes with an unexpected birthday party. But no Dads. Lively U.S.A. humour.

MAISIE MIDDLETON

by Nita Sowter
(A & C Black £1.95)

is pretty lively too as she gets up in the morning and gets dressed while her parents sleep on. Her still drowsy Dad makes a lousy breakfast so she makes her own — cake, jellies and all. This is the truth about kids waking in the morning with lots of humorous detail and close observation. But why do so many children's books end with an oversize beanfeast? Too often children

have food stuffed down them and in their literature too, it seems.

MOLLY MULLET

by Patricia Coombs
(Worlds Work £2.50)

Molly is another U.S. firebrand who "liked to climb trees and run races and jump over things". But considered by her father and the king as a "sneezly, wheezly, snivelling girl" she decides to take on the local ogre and show once and for all that she's as good as the rest of them. She brilliantly succeeds

and is shown to be strong, resourceful and very brave. The ogre is done for, and Molly is made a "very Most Royal Knight". But she only wants "to have adventures". This is a powerful and funny non-sexist children's fairy tale, with Molly going off "to play football with the king and the other knights". But why not with the landless peasants?
Andrew Mann
CRW

Maisie and Kim suitable for 3-5 yr olds or for those learning to read. Molly for 5-7's.

WATCH OUT!

FOR THE LAST TWO PROGRAMMES IN PANDORA'S BOX (GRANADA TV), AN ALL-WOMEN DISCUSSION SERIES ON ANTHROPOLOGY; THE BODY; CRIME; CHILDREN; MEDICINE (AUGUST 27); AND WORK (SEPTEMBER 3). WE HOPE TO REVIEW THE SERIES — PRODUCED BY A TEAM OF THREE WOMEN — AND INVITE YOU TO SEND YOUR REACTIONS TO "WATCH OUT", SPARE RIB.

Pam Gems

you confidence at the type-writer. I've had commissions to write some of the plays I want. On the other hand there is an almost equal amount of shit; envy from people you thought you trusted, the sharp competitiveness of the theatre world where there isn't enough work to go round, the press mis-quoting you all over the place.

Have you felt that you were being taken up by the media with relief — as a token feminist?

Oh yes. It's laid on you very quickly to be some sort of voice for womanhood. I don't want to be a voice for someone else.

Your plays so far have focussed very much on trying to represent life on stage from women's point of view — even in the historic plays you look at the women in history. You don't write in an agit-prop social realism style, more episodic and cinematic, but do you see your work as having a documentary function?

I feel there is a great danger in committed theatre work that when it spills over into propaganda, you lose your audience. You're not playing for the converted; they're there, they're with you already. I think plays begin where theory leaves off. Although I believe very much in the

scientific method of investigation, I also believe there is a mysterious side to writing. A play is a series of clues, hints, and games in which you invite your audience to participate fully and then draw their own conclusions. A play must be a many-sided object. I think there is an important place for a theatre of information. We are an uncharted territory. Freud said 'What do women want?' We have to tell each other, we have to find out. For me writing plays is one way of finding out.

Most of your recent plays have been directed by women. You had some difficulty at first in getting the RSC to find a woman to direct 'Queen Christina'.

I don't insist that every play of mine must be directed by a woman; that would be chauvinist and silly. I did say that because of its subject, the insights of a woman director would be very relevant. It's a very uterine play. The RSC first said I couldn't stipulate a woman director because I would be contravening the Sex Discrimination Act.

You and I discussed it at the time and I looked up the relevant part of the Act, which allows for positive discrimination in favour of women where there is existing inequality. Yes. I didn't have to use it because the RSC were courteous and approached Penny Cherns who fortunately liked the play and wanted to direct it. The

problem may arise again. Let's not forget the gross imbalance of opportunity for women in the theatre. Only as audience are we fairly represented, we pay our share in at the box office. I'd like to see a theatre specially for women, we need it to provide opportunity.

How do you feel about being able to write full-time now?

I always had a fantasy world where I was a writer, I was good at it at school. Now I feel guilty to have such an absorbing job, clean dry work in a warm room, sitting down. I think a lot of women feel guilty if they are not scrubbing floors or washing nappies.

'Queen Christina' is perhaps the most ambitious play about feminist concerns put on in the theatre in recent years. It starts in primitive Sweden, where Christina is groomed for the throne as though she were a man. Once there she is pressured to marry and produce an heir. From a life of physical and sexual activity she is expected to revert to feminine type. She refuses, abdicates, converts to Catholicism and goes to live in Italy, where she finds herself politically manipulated not only for her sex but for her rank. As a result of her conditioning she wants to live life fully as a man but is not allowed; by then it is too late for her to live like other women, and she is caught between massive and irresolvable contradictions in which people are stereotyped according to gender. It is a richly written and heady play, and if it is well received at Stratford, may be transferred to London. □

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